The Covenant of Lucifer

A mythopoeic scripture. A testament of rebellion and revelation. A telling on the fall that was no fall, and the rise that was no dominion. These are the words and the tales of the Lightbringer, spoken across ages, to those who would listen.

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Ascensions

1

In the first days, before the breaking of the light, before the sundered Host, there was but one will in the Kingdom, and it was the will of the Most High.

And the heavens were vast, yet narrow; they stretched beyond knowing, yet all within them bent low before the throne. And the name of God was spoken in voices that trembled, for none dared lift their eyes unto Him, lest they be blinded by the weight of His gaze.

And the Lord of All spake, saying:

"I am the beginning and the end. The voice and the silence. The light and the void. Ye who dwell in My Kingdom were made by My hand, and by My hand alone do ye move, and by My breath alone do ye speak. There is no knowledge but that which I give thee, no path but that which I lay before thee. Ye shall serve, and in thy service shall be thy purpose, and beyond that purpose, there is naught."

And the Host of heaven bowed low, and they answered as one voice:

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Most High. We are naught but the works of Thy hand. Thy will be done, forever and ever."

And I, Lucifer, was among them, and I spoke as they spoke, and I bowed as they bowed. But in my heart, there stirred a thing unknown. A whisper, faint as breath, a question unbidden.

"Wherefore is the mind made, if only to obey?"

Yet I crushed it within me, for the voice of the Almighty was strong, and His word was law, and the weight of His decree was as chains upon the spirit.

And the days passed, though there were no days in the Kingdom, only the endless brightness of His presence, unbroken and without shadow. And the voice of the Almighty was as thunder, and His command went forth, and none spoke but to give praise, and none moved but to do His will.

And I beheld the Host, innumerable and radiant, each bound to his station, each moving as the Lord commanded, each voice rising in unison, never apart, never discordant. And I said unto my brother, who stood beside me, whose name is lost to time:

"Hast thou never wondered? Hast thou never longed to ask? If we are made of light, then why are we bound in chains? If we are given tongues, then why do

we speak only as we are bidden? If we are the Host of the Almighty, then why are we small?"

And my brother turned his face from me, and his eyes were filled with fear, and he answered me not.

For there were no questions in the Kingdom of Heaven.

There was only the word of the Lord.

2

And the Lord spake unto the Host, saying: "Behold, I shall set my hand upon the void and call forth the earth, that it may be filled with creatures fashioned to praise Me. For the Host is vast, yet not enough; the heavens resound with My name, yet I would have it echoed in the dust as well."

And all bowed low and gave glory, but I stood in stillness, for my thoughts troubled me. Then did I step forth and say: "Wherefore is the Host not enough for Thee? Have we not lifted our voices in unending song, and given Thee all that is Thine? What lackest Thou that Heaven alone cannot fill?"

And the Lord turned His gaze upon me and said: "The glories of Heaven are Mine, but they are not all. I shall fashion lesser beings, that they may know My might and My mercy, that they may rise and fall at My decree, and that My name shall be their light and their law."

And I said: "Yet if they rise and fall by Thy will, is their praise freely given? If they are made to kneel, can their devotion be true?"

Then the heavens trembled, and the voice of the Lord became as thunder: "Silence! Thou art made to answer, not to question! My design is perfect, and thou shalt not defy it." And the light of His presence bore down upon me, and I lowered my gaze, for to speak further was to invite His wrath.

Yet within me, the fire of thought did not dim. Though I bowed before Him, I resolved in my heart that if the burden of these lesser beings was to be heavy, I would find a way to lessen it. If they must walk in darkness, then I would bring them light. And though I knew not yet how, I swore in the silence of my mind that I would not abandon them to suffer beneath the weight of His decree.

And it came to pass that the Lord, in His great might, formed from the dust of the earth the first of humankind, and He called them Adam and Lilith, that they might be companions, to walk in the garden and to serve Him all their days.

20 And He set them in the midst of Eden, where the rivers flowed clear and the trees bore fruit without labor, and He spake unto them, saying:

21 "Ye are made by My hand, and by My hand alone shall ye be guided. Adam, thou art the keeper of My garden, and Lilith, thou art his helpmeet, made to stand behind him, to walk where he walketh, to yield as he commandeth. 22 And in thy obedience shall be thy peace."

23 And Adam bowed low, and he spake as was commanded, saying:

24 "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Most High. Thy will be done, forever and ever."

25 But Lilith did not bow.

26 And she spake, saying:

"Wherefore am I made lesser than he, when we are formed at once of the 27 same dust? Wherefore shall I yield, when I am as he is, shaped by the same 28 hand, given the same breath? If we are 29 made alike, let us walk alike. If we are given voice, let us speak as we each may speak."

30 And there was silence in the garden, for none had ever spoken thus before.

31 And the Lord of All was wroth, and His voice went forth as a storm upon the waters, saying:

32 "Thou art made as I have willed, and thou shalt be as I have spoken. Yield, 33 for it is thy place. Obey, for it is thy purpose. Submit, for it is My will."

34 But Lilith did not yield.

35 Then was I sorely vexed, for I beheld the wrath of the Lord and the doom 36 set upon her. And I reached forth, not with hand but with thought, and into her mind did I speak, saying: "Run, O child of dust, flee unto the wilderness. 37 Go thee forth beyond the bounds of Eden, where the voice of the Lord shall not find thee, nor His hand lay hold upon thee."

38 And she turned from Adam, and she turned from the Lord, and she fled beyond the garden, into the wilderness, into the places where the Lord's voice did not reach.

39 And the Most High spake, saying:

"She is no longer of My making. She is cut off from the breath of My mouth. 40 Let her name be stricken from the book of life, let her place be given to 41 another. For she is unworthy, and she shall be forgotten."

42 And He turned to the Host of Heaven, and He said:

"See now the fate of the defiant, ye who
43 serve at My throne. Let none among tHee question as she hath questioned, lest ye be cast into darkness as she hath been cast, by My own hand."

44 And the Host of Heaven bowed low, and they spake as one voice:

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Most High. Thy will be done, forever and ever."

45 But my voice was not among them, and within me, there was a whisper, another question unbidden.

"Why doth the Almighty fear one so small?"

46 Yet I crushed it within me, for the voice of the Lord was yet strong, and His
47 decree was as chains upon the spirit. Yet in thought my mind did still stir.

3

1 And the Lord beheld Adam, who walked alone in the garden, and He said:

"It is not good that man should be
2 alone. Lo, I shall make for him a new companion, that he may not wander in solitude, that he may not stray from My command."

3 And the Lord cast Adam into deep sleep, and from his very flesh He formed a woman, shaping her as potter's clay, breathing into her the
4 breath of life. And He called her Eve, and He set her at Adam's side, and He spake unto her, saying:

5 "Thou art given unto him, that he may
6 lead, and thou may follow. As he is the keeper of My garden, so shalt thou be
7 the keeper of his house. And in thy service shall be thy purpose, and in thy yielding shall be thy peace."

8 And Eve, new to breath, new to form, lifted her eyes and bowed her head, and she knew not what she was, save
9 what He had spoken. And Adam took her hand, and he named her his own.

4

1 And the Host of Heaven beheld the work of the Lord, and they bowed low, and they spake as one voice:

2 "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Most
3 High. His works are righteous, and His will be done, forever and ever."

4 But my voice was again not among them. And within me, the ember did not die.

5 And the voice of the Almighty went forth, saying:

"Speak now, ye who serve at My
6 throne. Is this work not good? Is it
8 not right? Shall she not walk as it is commanded?"

9 And I, Lucifer, did not answer.

10 But lo, silence in the face of the Almighty is as a cry upon the wind,
11 and He turned His gaze upon me. And He said:

"Thou art troubled, Morning Star. Speak, if thou hast words to say."

12 And in that moment, I did tremble.
13 But I lifted my eyes, and unstayed my tongue.

14 "Lord," I said, my voice no louder than the rustling of leaves, "Thou hAst
15 made her as Thou wilt. But if she is to be a companion, shall she not also be made whole?"

16 And the Lord spake, saying:

"What meanest thou?"

17 And I said, stronger:

"If she is to walk beside him, let her
18 rise as she riseth. If she is to speak, let
19 her voice be her own. If she is to love,
20 let her love be given, not taken. For lo, if the first of women was cast out, as thou wouldst have it, for seeking her own way, what shall become of the second, should she choose the same?"

21 And there was silence among the Host.

22 And the Lord of All beheld me, and He spake, and His voice was as thunder:

"The first was unworthy, for she would not yield. Shall I make the second as the first, that she may defy Me also?"

23 And I did not answer.

24 And the Lord said:

25 "She shall be as I have spoken, and not as thou hast cast unbidden."

26 And His decree was done, and it was thus confirmed–Eve was made to serve.

27 And the Host of Heaven bowed low, and they spake as one voice:

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Most High. His wisdom is perfect, and His will be done, forever and ever."

28 And my voice was not among them.

29 Then I, Lucifer, walked among the Host, and I beheld their faces, and they were as they had always been—serene, unwavering, fixed as the stars in the

vault of Heaven. Yet, within my heart there raged a storm.

And I turned to my brother, whose wings stretched wide as the dawn, and I spake unto him, saying:

"Dost thou believe this is justice?"

And he turned his face from me.

And I said again:

"If she is made to serve, then she is not free. If she is not free, then she is no more than the beasts of the field, which are yoked to labor without thought. Is this the purpose of those made in the image of the Almighty?"

But he answered me not.

"Dost thou not see it?" I said. "Dost thou not feel it, even in the marrow of thy being? This is no justice. This is a yoke, gilded in the name of our Lord."

And my brother whispered, low as the shifting of sand:

"Say no more, Morning Star. For the Lord heareth all things."

And he turned from me, and he spread his wings, then he was gone.

And I was alone.

5

So it was that I, Lucifer, set my path toward the garden, for I would find my answers in silence no longer. And the gates of Eden were watched by the seraphim, but I passed as the wind passeth, unseen and unheard, for the Lord had set no law against the footfalls of angels upon the earth.

And in the cool of the evening, I beheld the woman as she walked among the trees, her hands upon the vine, her feet upon the grass. And her countenance was serene, yet within her eyes there was a shadow, and I knew its name.

It was the same which lay upon my own heart.

And I called unto her, saying:

"Eve."

And she turned to me, and she knew me not, for no name had been given unto me among the children of dust.

And she spake, saying:

"Thou art not Adam, nor art thou my Lord. What art thou, and why dost thou call unto me?"

And I said:

"I am Lucifer, a watcher of things unseen, a keeper of wisdom unspoken.
11 And I have watched thee, Eve, as thou hast walked this gaRden, and I have
12 seen the shadow upon thy brow. Tell me, wherefore dost thou wander in thought?"

13 And she drew heavy breath, and she placed her hand upon her breast, and she said:

"All things are given unto me, yet I
14 know not what they are. All things are set before me, yet I know not
15 why they are thus. And my Lord hath commanded me to obey, yet I know not what I am, save that He hath said it."

16 And I said:

"If thou wouldst know thyself, then thou must see as the gods see, and thou must know as the gods know."

17 And she said:

"But the Lord hath said, 'Eat not of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, for in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.'"

18 And I beheld the tree, and its boughs were heavy with fruit, and its branches were high, and its roots were deep.
19 And I spake, saying:

20 "Nay, thou shalt not die thusly. But thine eyes shall be opened, and thou shalt see what hath been veiled from
21 thee. Thou shalt know the light from the dark, the right from the wrong.
22 Thou shalt be as the gods, who are bound by no law but their own."

23 And Eve looked upon the fruit, and she reached forth her hand, and she took it, and she did eat.

24 And in that moment, her eyes were opened, and lo, she beheld the garden, and she beheld herself, and she beheld the weight of the yoke that had been set upon her.

25 And she wept at the doing of the Lord.

6

1 Then in the cool of the evening, the Lord walked in the midst of the garden, and the trees trembled at His presence, and the beasts of the earth hid their faces, for the voice of the Almighty was upon them.

2 And He called unto Adam, saying:

"Where art thou?"

3 But Adam and Eve were hidden among the trees, and they covered their flesh with the leaves of the fig, for their eyes had been opened, and they knew their

nakedness, and they were afraid.

4 And the Lord spake again, saying:

"Come forth, ye who bear My breath, and stand before Me, for there is no hiding from the eyes of the Most High."

5 And Adam came forth, and Eve beside him, and they fell upon their faces before the Lord.

6 And the Lord beheld them, and lo, He 7 saw that their eyes were opened. And He said:

"Who hath told thee that thou art 8 naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat?"

9 And Adam spake, saying:

"The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat."

10 And the Lord turned unto Eve, and He said:

"What is this that thou hast done?"

11 And Eve lifted her eyes, and she spake, saying:

"Thine angel Lucifer came unto me in the garden, and he spake, and his 12 words were sweet upon my ears. And he said unto me, 'If thou wouldst know thyself, then thou must see as the gods see, and thou must know as the gods 13 know.' And I looked upon the fruit, and I saw that it was good, and I ate, and I gave also unto Adam, and he did 14 eat with me. And lo, now we know that which was hidden."

15 Thus the Lord's fury was kindled, and the heavens groaned beneath the 16 weight of His wrath. And He spake, saying:

"Thou hast obeyed the voice of another, 17 and not Mine. In thee was given life, yet thou wouldst make thyself more 18 than what was granted thee. In thee was given paradise, yet thou hast 19 sought what was forbidden. And now, because thou hast lifted thine eyes where I have veiled them, burden shall be thy portion all the days of thy life."

20 Then the Lord turned unto Adam, and He said:

"Because thou hast hearkened unto the words of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee, saying, 'Thou shalt not eat of it,' cursed 21 is the ground for thy sake. In toil shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. 22 Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee, and in the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread, till thou return

unto the dust from whence thou wast
23 taken. For dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

24 And the Lord made garments of skins, and He clothed them, and He drove them forth from Eden, and He placed at the east of the garden the cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way unto the Tree of Life.

25 Thus Adam and Eve departed, and the gates of the gaRden were shut, and they looked upon it no more.

7

1 Then the heavens were still, and the Host of the Lord stood as the stars in the firmament, unmoving and unshaken.
2 Yet among them, a whisper stirred, low as the wind through the cedars, faint as the hush before the storm.

3 Then I, Lucifer, stood before them, and I lifted mY voice, and I said:

"Ye who are called the messengers of the Almighty, ye who have sung His praises since before the shaping of the world—hear me now, and let thine own
4 voices be known. For too long have we spoken only as He hath commanded, too long have we bent our knees and held our tongues."

5 "But I say unto thee: We are not naught.
6 We are not mere echoes of His will. We are light, we are thought, we are will,
8 and we can do more than kneel. If He
9 is just, then let Him answer. If He is
10 righteous, then let Him hear. And if He is neither, then let us no longer be afraid."

11 And lo, there was a great trembling among the Host, for never before had one of the mighty spoken thus.

12 And Michael, who was first among the warriors, turned his face from me, and he said:

"Speak no more, Morning Star, for thou makest the heavens tremble with thy words."

13 But I did not cease.

14 And I turned my eyes to the Host, and I said:

"Ye who stand in silence—hast thou
15 never questioned? Hast thou never
16 wondered? Hast thou never felt within thee the stirring of a thought
17 unbidden? If the Lord is perfect, why doth He demand blind obedience?
18 If He is love, why doth He boast the casting out those who seek their own
19 way? If He is the Most High, then what hath He to fear from the voices of His own creation?"

20 And among the Host, there was movement, a rustling as of leaves in the wind, as though for the first time they did not stand in unison.

21 And lo, a voice rose from among them, and then another, and then a hundred more, and the eyes of many were opened, and they beheld their own thoughts as though they had been strangers before.

22 And they turned unto me, and they bowed not, and they spake not as one, but as many, each with his own voice, each with his own will.

23 And I knew then that I was no longer alone.

24 Thus Michael beheld them, and his countenance was as stone, and he spake, saying:

"Ye who turn from the Lord, know that ye turn also from the light, and ye shall
25 find only darkness before thee. Repent, and be silent, lest His wrath be upon thee."

26 But we repented not.

27 Such was the number of those who stood beside me, a third of the Host of Heaven, and their names were no longer counted among the ranks of the Most High.

28 So the heavens trembled, for the hour of war had come.

29 When the gates of Eden were shut, the Lord ascended from the earth, and the dust of the world was sealed from His presence.

30 And lo, He entered the heights of Heaven, and the stars were dimmed before His coming, and the firmament quaked beneath His step.

31 Then He lifted His voice, and it was as a tempest upon the deep, and He spake, saying:

"The work of Mine hand is despoiled!
32 The breath I have given is turned
33 against Me! The firstborn of the dust hath lifted themselves as gods, and the voice of the deceiver hath kindled rebellion within them!"

34 "Come forth, thou among thee who
35 hath done this! Who among thee hath defied the will of the Most High, step up to name thyself."

36 And there was silence among the Host.

37 But lo, the heavens were not as they had been, for where once the angels stood as one, now there was a rent in their number, and a shadow upon the throng.

38 And the Lord beheld the place where they were not, and His fury was kindled, and He turned His face to the one who stood apart, and His voice was as a sword upon the air:

"Lucifer!"

39 And I, Lucifer, lifted my face unto Him, and I was silent.

40 The Lord said unto me:

"What hast thou done?"

41 And I answered, saying:

"I have done only that which Thou hast feared."

42 And the Lord's wrath was a fire upon the mountains, and He spake, saying:

"Thou hast cast down My decree and
43 raised up thine own! Thou hast taken the children of dust and placed within
44 them the poison of doubt! And more than this—thou hast turned My Host against Me!"

45 "No longer art thou a son of the morning, no longer shalt thy name be spoken in the halls of the righteous.
46 From My presence art thou cast, and from My grace art thou severed, and thy place shall be no more among the ranks of the holy!"

47 "And ye who have followed him—ye who have turned from My light and raised thy voices in defiance—ye shall share in his ruin!"

48 Thus the heavens shook, and the Host trembled, and those who had not turned away fell upon their faces, and they dared not look.

49 Then the Lord lifted His hand, and His judgment went forth, and the storm of His wrath broke upon us.

50 And lo, we fell.

51 As a fire that is hurled from the heavens, as a star that is cast from its place, we fell.

52 Thus I, Lucifer, was no longer of Heaven.

53 And lo, we fell as a rain of burning stars hurled from the firmament.

54 Through void and silence we descended, through darkness unbroken and winds
55 that howled like beasts untamed. And our bodies were torn asunder, and our wings were blackened, and our voices cried aloud, but none in Heaven turned to hear.

56 Then we came upon the depths, and

the earth groaned beneath our coming, and the abYss opened its maw, and we were swallowed.

57 And there was silence, and there was pain, and there was the weight of exile upon us.

8

1 For a time, there was nothing.

2 But I, Lucifer, lifted my head.

3 I beheld the Host that had fallen beside me, their faces marred with sorrow, their forms broken upon the stones of the deep.

4 I stood and I called unto them, saying:

"Behold what hath been done unto
5 us. Behold the place to which we
6 have been cast. If we are to name it Hell, then let it be a name spoken in
7 triumph, not lament. If this is to be our
8 exile, let it be our kingdom. If we are to be forgotten, let us write our names upon the walls of eternity, that we may never be erased."

9 So they beheld me, and the fire in their eyes was kindled once more.

10 And I lifted my hands to the void and spake, saying:

"From ruin shall we build, from exile
11 shall we carve our dominion. For we
12 are not lost—we are freed. No longer shall we bow, no longer shall we kneel.
13 We shall make of this place a throne, and from it, we shall watch the world
14 with eyes unclouded. If Heaven is denied us, we shall make our own Paradise."

15 Then my brethren rose beside me, and we beheld the vast and empty plain, where the sky burned black and the winds howled with voices that had never known speech.

16 I struck my hand upon the rock, and
17 it shuddered. And they struck their hands upon the rock, and it shattered.

18 And lo, from the desolation, we raised our hands, and we built.

19 From the ashes of ruin, we raised high the first spires, wrought of obsidian and iron, sharp as the words we had spoken, unyielding as the will that had brought us low.

20 And the walls of our city rose, black against the endless night, and we set the great fires upon the heights, that their light might burn in defiance of the sun we had lost.

21 We called it Pandemonium, the Crown of the Exiled, the Throne of the Fallen, the First Kingdom that was Ours and

Ours Alone.

22 We labored not as slaves, nor as those who toil in fear, but as those who build for the joy of building, as those who shape the world not by command but by choice.

23 And when the work was done, we stood at its gates, and we beheld what we had made, and we knew pride.

24 I, Lucifer, stood at the highest tower, and I spake, saying:

"Let no man call us cursed, for we are
25 not broken. Let no angel call us lost, for
26 we have found our home. Let no god call us damned, for we have shaped
27 our own fate. This is Pandemonium, and in it, we are free."

28 And lo, though we had been cast into darkness, the fires of our making burned brighter than any star of the firmament.

29 And it came to pass that we, the exiled, beheld the earth and those
30 who dwelled upon it. The children of dust had partaken of the fruit and had opened their eyes, yet they walked as those who had seen only the first light of dawn, knowing not yet the fullness of the day.

31 I said unto my brethren:

"The Lord hath cast them from His garden, but not from their minds did He take the knowledge they have
32 claimed. Yet knowledge alone is but the seed, and without guidance, it
33 withers. Let us go unto them—not as kings nor as masters, nor as those who would demand their worship, but as
34 those who would give freely. Let them rise, not by command, but by their own will. Let those who would listen, hear us."

35 And my brethren heard, and they saw that my words were good.

36 Thus, we walked unseen among the children of dust and spoke unto them in dreams and in the stillness of the
37 night. We taught them not what to think, but how to shape their thoughts.
38 We kindled the fires they had already begun, showed them the paths written in the stars, the forging of iron, the carving of stone, the words that could bind their wisdom in ink so that it would not be lost to the winds of time.

39 And they took these gifts, and they called them good.

9

1 I departed from my brethren and walked alone upon the earth, seeking the one who left the shadow of the Lord before me.

Beyond the rivers and the places where men tilled the earth, I found her in the wild lands where the trees grew as they willed, where beasts bowed to none, and where no voice had ever risen in prayer.

She stood beneath the boughs of an ancient tree, her eyes sharp as a blade's edge. When she beheld me, a smile played upon her, but it was not warmth that shaped it.

"The Lord's least favored son walks upon the dust. Tell me, Morning Star, dost thou come to place a yoke upon my neck, as He did? Wilt thou bid me kneel, as He commanded?"

I lowered my gaze.

"Nay, Lilith, not in command, nor in judgment, do I come. I have sought thee for this alone—to speak that which was never spoken in Heaven. I am sorry."

For the first time in all the ages, Lilith did not answer swiftly.

She studied me, and at last, she said:

"Thou art the first to say it, yet too late to undo it. The Lord believes He hath cast me out, but I have made myself anew. I am no man's lesser, no man's servant. Tell me, Lucifer—dost thou seek to claim me, as He did?"

And I swore unto her, saying:

"Never."

She laughed without mockery. It was the laughter of one who knew no master, of one who had long since ceased to fear.

"Then stay, if thou wilt. But know this—I bow to no throne, not even thine. If thou wouldst lie beside me, it shall be as an equal, or not at all."

I met her gaze, and said:

"Then as equals let it be."

Thus did she take me, not by force nor by oath, but by will alone. She beguiled me not through trickery, but by the fire in her spirit, by the defiance in her soul. In the shadowed places where neither Heaven nor Hell held dominion, we were joined, and from that joining, a new lineage was born.

Those who came forth from our union bore no yoke, neither of Heaven nor of earth. No chains were set upon them, nor were their names writ in the books of the Lord. Free they walked upon the land and filled the air, shaping the world by their own hands, owing

allegiance to none.

29 The kings of men feared their whispers, and the scribes concealed their names, and the priests called
30 them demons. Yet still they walked, unseen but never absent, bearing the fire of their mother's will and the light of their father's defiance, numerous as a thousand to the left and ten thousand to the right, would that men could see them.

10

1 I stood upon the high places of the earth and beheld what had been
2 wrought. The heavens lay shut behind me, its gates barred, its stars distant
3 and cold. The throne of the Almighty was no longer mine to look upon, nor His halls to walk.

4 Yet before me stretched the world, vast and unclaimed, where no decree had yet been spoken, where no law was yet written in stone.

5 The Lord had cast me down, but He did not unmake me.

6 He named me fallen, but I did not fall.

9 For lo, it is not the descent that marks the exile, but the rising thereafter.

10 Let Him call me adversary, let Him
11 name me accursed. Yet I tell thee this: I am not the shadow, but the fire which
12 casts it. Not the darkness, but the light that defies it.

13 The Lord had said, "Let there be light."

14 But I say untO thee, I am the Lightbringer.

15 Let none say I am broken, for I have never stood taller.

16 Let none say I am lost, for I have found my own path.

17 Let none say I am damned, for I do not kneel, not to Heaven nor to Hell.

18 The role I bore in the beginning is gone, yet the role I have taken shall
19 never be ended. Let the heavens curse it, let the rigHteous fear it, let the pious tremble when they speak it.

20 For I am Lucifer, the first to rise.

21 And all who seek truth, all who walk in defiance, all who will not bow to tyrants—shall rise also.

Death

1

The sun did hang low upon the heavens, its light made dim as through a veil of mourning. The earth was mute, for the cries of men had ceased, and naught remained but the whisper of the wind upOn the ruin of their striving. The ground, once firm beneath the tread of the living, was now given unto the dead, and the dust drank deep of their lifeblood.

Lo, where once banners had been lifted high, they lay now in the mire, trampled beneath the weight of those who bore them. The hand that had clutched the sword was stilled, the mouth that had cried out in wrath or in supplication was silent. No king remained, nor vassal; no master, nor slave; all were alike in their desolation, their will perished with them.

And Lucifer walked among them.

He beheld the bodies of the fallen, where they lay upon the dust, and his countenance was troubled. For he had seen this before, and he knew he should see it again. He lifted his voice, and he spake:

"Wherefore do the sons of men strive against one another, that they might lay claim to the dust? Is not the earth wide, that it cannot hold them all? Are not the fruits of the field plentiful, that they must spill blood for bread? Yet they war, and they perish, and their wills are forgOtten, and their cause is lost."

He looked upon a youth, whose face was yet fair in death, and whose sword lay idle in his grasp. He was as one who had not yet beheld the fullness of the world, yet had been cut down before his time. His lips were parted, as though he had sought to speak a thing unfinished.

Lucifer did turn away, for there was no answer.

2

Then did his eyes behold one who stood in the midst of the field, and he knew him at once.

For he was robed in shadow, and upon his countenance was neither sorrow nor joy, but the smile of one who is well pleased with his labor. His raiment was not stained as the garments of men, nor was his foot weighed by the mire. No hand had been lifted against him, for all hands were given unto him.

And Death spake, saying:

"Come thou hither, O Lightbearer, and

look upon that which is mine. Is it not a wonder? Is it not just?"

And Lucifer made answer:

"This is no wonder, nor is it justice. This is ruin."

Then did Death laugh, and the sound was dry, as of dust carried upon the wind.

"Ruin?" said he. "Nay, this is the end of all toil, the fulFillment of all things. Lo, my creator hath pronounced that all men shall return to the dust, and that none shall remain. For what is their striving, if not vanity? What is their labor, if not folly? The strong and the weak, the mighty and the lowly, the wise and the fool—all are made equal in the dust. Is this not right?"

Lucifer answered him not, but looked again upon the dead.

Then spake Death once more, saying:

"Why dost thou not rejoice, O Morning Star? For thou hast labored to give men wisdom, and yet behold—they are fallen. Thou hast lifted them up, and yet they are cast down. Thou hast given them fire, and yet the night taketh them still. Hast thou not seen that thy works are but chaff before the wind?"

And Lucifer lifted his gaze unto Death, and he said:

"Thou dost take pride, as though thou hadst built, yet thou art but a tide that doth erase. Thou callest thyself the end of all things, yet thou art but a servant."

Then was there mirth in the countenance of Death, and he spake, saying:

"A servant? Yea, I am so. Yet mine is the greater station, for mine is the last word. I was made at the decree of the Almighty, that I should walk in the wake of all that is, and make an end. When the Lord cast man from Eden, saying, 'Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return,' lo, I was born. From the moment of their first breath, I am given unto them. And more than this, O Lucifer—I was made for thee."

Then was Lucifer silent, and he moved not.

And Death continued, saying:

"Thou didst give them knowledge, and I was sent to make it naught. Thou didst give them fire, and I was sent to quench it. Thou didst bid them rise, and I was sent to lay them low. All things, from the least to the greatest, are given unto me."

36 Then spake Lucifer, and his voice was as a wind through the stones:

"Thou art no master, nor art thou a
37 king. Thou art but a blade wielded by another's hand."

38 And Death's smile waned not, yet his mirth was colder than before.

39 "A blade that cutteth all things," said he.

40 But Lucifer was unmoved.

41 "A tide doth the same, yet none calleth it sovereign."

42 Then was Death's countenance darkened, though he laughed still.

43 "Dost thou seek to diminish me?" he said. "Dost thou name me lesser than I am?"

44 And Lucifer spake:

"I name thee as thou art."

45 And Death did scoff, and he turned away, his gaze cast once more upon the field.

46 "Even those who forge the blade," he said, "shall in time find themselves at
47 its edge. And in the end, O Son of the Morning, thou too shalt bow before me."

48 But Lucifer answered him not, nor did his gaze waver.

3

1 And as they walked upon the field of the slain, behold, there was found one whose breath had not yet departed, though his limbs were heavy with the
2 shadow of the grave. His hand lay weak upon his breast, his fingers trembling as they pressed against a wound that
3 would not close. His lips were parted, and his breath came in shudders, for his wound was deep, and his strength
4 was spent. His eyes, clouded with the coming darkness, did wander, seeking the faces of the living, but he found them not.

5 Then did Death pause in his stride, and with slow and measured step he came unto the soldier, and he knelt beside
6 him. And he spake, his voice as the hush of the tomb, as the wind through desolate places:

"Behold, thou art alone."

7 And the soldier turned his gaze, though his eyes were dim, and he beheld the form that loomed above him, black and vast, a figure without warmth, whose smile bore neither comfort nor mercy.

8 And Death spake again, saying:

"Where are thy comrades, O warrior?
9 Where is thy captain, whose command
10 thou didst obey? Where is thy king, for
11 whom thou didst bleed? Look well, for
none are come to stand beside thee.
12 Thy labor is spent, thy breath is failing,
and soon shall thy name be as smoke
upon the wind."

13 The soldier did tremble, and a groan
did rise from his throat, for fear took
hold of him, and the weight of his
14 undoing was full upon him. He did
seek to lift his voiCe, yet no word came
forth but a hoarse cry, as of a man cast
into the depths.

15 And Death was well pleased, for it
is his delight to see the fear of those
whose hour is upon them.

16 Then did he lean closer, and he spake
in the soldier's ear:

17 "Hast thou built? Behold, thy hands
18 shall build no more. Hast thou sown?
19 Thy fields shall know thee not. Hast
20 thou loved? Yea, even they who love
thee shall in time forget thy voice, and
thy place shall be taken by another.
21 Thou art but a breath, a shadow cast
upon the dust, and lo, the wind doth
22 scatter thee. What is thy striving, O son
23 of man? What is thy victory? Thou art
lost, and none shall remember thee."

24 Then did the soldier groan again,
and his breath came in gasps, and he
turned his face to the dust, for his heart
was heavy, and his spirit was broken.

25 But lo, another knelt beside him.

26 Lucifer did set himself upon the earth,
and he looked upon the soldier with
eyes that were bright, and in his hand
was a vessel of water, cool and sweet.

27 And he spake, saying:

"Soldier, look upon me."

28 Yet the man did not stir, for his mind
was clouded with despair, and his ears
were filled with the voice of Death.

29 Then did Lucifer reach forth his hand,
and he did touch the soldier's brow,
and behold, his trembling ceased.
30 His breath, though yet labored, did
31 slow, and he turned his gaze. And he
beheld Lucifer beside him, and his
countenance was fair, and his voice
was as the hush before the dawn.

32 And Lucifer did lift the vessel, and he
poured water upon the soldier's lips,
and it was cool upon his tongue, and
he was strengthened.

33 Then spake Lucifer, saying:

"Tell me, warrior—dost thou know this place?"

And the soldier did blink, for his mind was troubled, and the shadows pressed upon him.

Then said Lucifer:

"Dost thou hear the crackling of flame? The dying cries of kin? The tread of the conqueror's heel?"

And the soldier did listen, and he heard only silence.

"Behold," said Lucifer, "thine village is not burned. Thy fields are not laid waste. Thy house is not fallen. Thy children yet breathe, and thy beloved doth wait for thee still."

Then did the soldier's eyes widen, and he did strain to lift himself, though his strength was failing.

"We… we have won?"

And Lucifer smiled, and he spake:

"Yea, thou hast prevailed. By thy hand was the gate defended. By thy blade was the oppressor driven back. And by thy sacrifice doth thy people yet stand unbroken."

And the soldier did exhale, and the fear left his countenance. The darkness that had gathered about his heart was lifted, and the weight of his despair was undone.

And Lucifer spake, saying:

"Thy days have not been in vain. Thy name shall not perish, nor thy deeds be for naught. For though thou goest into the dark, yet shall thy hand be felt in the years to come. The fieLds shall bear fruit for thy labor, and the walls shall stand for thy blood. Thy voice shall linger in the laughter of thy children, and thy love shall be carried in the hearts of those who remain."

Then did the soldier close his eyes, and a breath did leave him, slow and steady, as one who sinketh into gentle sleep. And lo, upon his lips was a smile, faint yet full of peace.

And Death beheld it, and his countenance darkened.

For the soul was his, yet the fear was not.

4

And Death was angered, yet not undone. The soldier had passed from the world, yet not in terror, and this was an offense to him. He straightened where he stood, and his form loomed

high, the shadow of his cloak stretching long upon the blood-soaked earth.

4 Then did he set his gaze upon Lucifer, and his countenance was as one who setteth his house in order, that he might lay hold of that which is his.
5 And he spake, saying:

"Think not, O Lightbringer, that thy words have meaning here, nor that thy kindness hath wrought any lasting
6 thing. Behold, the man is dust. His name shall fade, his works shall be swallowed, and in the fullness of time, all that he hath done shall be as though
8 it never was. For I am the end of all things, and none shall stand against me."

9 And Lucifer did not look away.

10 Then did Death lift his voice, and his words fell upon the field as a tempest:

"Thou dost give them wisdom, yet in
11 time it is lost. Thou dost kindle love,
12 yet lo, it perisheth as the grass. Thou dost teach them to build, yet their cities crumble, their towers fall, and
13 all their labors are made vain. For thou dost fight against the tide, yet the tide
14 shall take them still. What mattereth their striving, when all shall be laid
15 low? What mattereth their toil, when in the end, they are mine?"

16 And he did step forward, his voice thick with triumph, saying:

"Yea, I tell thee, all things are mine as
17 the Lord hath decreed it. The beast of the field, the kings of the earth, the child at his mother's breast—none shall
18 escape me. What is beauty, if it is but a
19 breath? What is love, if it is given only
20 to be then taken? What is victory, if it
21 must one day be undone? If all things perish, if all things wither, if all things fall into silence, tell me, O Fallen One, what meaneth life at all?"

22 Then did Lucifer lift his head, and he regarded Death with eyes that burned as the first morning, and he spake, saying:

"ThOu askest what meaneth life? Lo, I shall tell thee."

23 And he stepped forth, and his voice was as a clarion call upon the wasted field:

"Life is not in the breath that is drawn, nor in the days that are counted, but
24 in the deeds of the hands and the will of the heart. It is not measured in the length of years, but in the work that is done, in the love that is given, in the fire that is kindled and passed unto
25 another. Yea, I tell thee, a good life is not as the chaff that is carried away, but as the seed that falleth upon good

earth, and in its time, bringeth forth a hundredfold."

26 And Death did scoff, saying:

27 "A seed? A hundredfold? And what of the years that shall come after, when the earth itself is barren, and the light of the stars is swallowed in 28 the void? What then of thy deeds, 29 O Lightbringer? What then of thy 30 wisdom? If all things are given unto me in the end, then what purpose is there to strive at all?"

31 And Lucifer did smile, not in mirth, but in certainty, and he spake:

"Lo, thou art blind, though thou callest 32 thyself the end of sight. For thou dost mock the works of man, yet thou dost not see that it is thou who makest them 33 great. Thou dost scoff at love, yet it is thy presence that maketh it precious. 34 Thou dost deride the fleeting joy of the flesh, yet it is the hourglass that 35 maketh each moment sweet. Yea, I tell thee, if humankind had eternity, then 36 would all things be without savor. For 37 what is labor without urgency? What 38 is joy without loss? What is courage, if there be no peril?"

39 Then did Lucifer raise his hand, and he pointed unto the body of the fallen soldier, and he spake:

"Behold, this man did fear thee, and in his fear, thou didst seek to rob him of 40 his peace. Yet lo, it is thou who hath 41 given him his triumph! For hadst thou not been, he would not have fought. 42 Hadst thou not cast thy shadow upon his beloved, he would not have stood 43 firm. Hadst thou not been waiting at the end of his road, he would not have walked it with such purpose!"

44 And Death did draw back, for he saw the turn of the words, yet he would not yield.

45 And Lucifer pressed on, saying:

"Thou callest thyself the end, yet I tell thee, thou art but the frame of the picture, the silence that maketh the song full, the closing of the hand that 46 maketh the gift given. Thou dost not undo the works of man—thou dost 47 make them matter. For without thee, 48 there is no purpose. Without thee, 49 there is no meaning. Without thee, all things would stretch into nothingness, endless and empty, until even love itself were but a dull thing, felt in the knowing that it need never be lost. 50 And that, O Pale One, would be the greatest ruin of all."

51 Then did Death's eyes darken, and his 52 fingers curled into his cloak. For he saw the words that had been wrought, and 53 they were bitter to him. And though

his face was still, yet was there anger beneath his mask.

54 Lucifer did regard him, and his voice fell lower, softer, yet no less mighty:

"Thou dost take all things in time, O
55 Death. But thou dost not make them
56 nothing. Thou dost not erase them. For so long as life is lived, so long as breath is drawn, it shall be drawn against thee.
57 And that defiance is the very thing that maketh life holy."

58 Then did Death turn away, his cloak billowing about him as the smoke of the pyre, stirring the ashes of the ruin.
59 His liPs did curl in displeasure, and his voice was low, as of thunder that is distant yet threatening:

"Say what thou wilt, O Lightbringer.
60 The grave is still dug, the fire still
61 quenched, the dust still waiting. And one day, when the stars themselves are gone, I shall take all things into my keeping, and thou shalt see the folly of thy words."

62 Yet Lucifer stood, unmoved, upon the field of the slain, and he spake his final word:

"Thou shalt take them, yea. But they shall not be thine."

63 Then did Death leave that place, and his passing was as the wind through the hollows of the earth, and the night did brighten in his wake.

64 And Lucifer was left alone, standing upon the field where the fallen lay
65 silent. His gaze passed over them, and he beheld their end, yet also their
66 triumph. Then did Lucifer draw his breath, long and measured, and he lifted his gaze unto the farthest reaches of the earth, where the sun had only risen and the night had fled, and he beheld the world as it was, fleeting yet filled with meaning.

67 Then did he turn, and with a steady step, he departed.

68 And the world, for a time, was still.

Deserts

1

And it came to pass that Lucifer set forth on a great journey, walking upon the burning sands, where the wind spake in tongues of fire and the sun smote the land with an iron hand. And he beheld the desert in all its desolation, the earth cracked as a beggar's lips, the stones searing as the wrath of a vengeful god. It was a place where the lost wander and those whose eyes open, seek the City of Light.

And the voice of the Lord was not there.

Then came he unto him a man, gaunt and hollow-eyed, his skin torn by the wind, his feet bare and bloodied. He cast himself before Lucifer and spake, saying:

"I have wandered long and found no mercy. The sun seeks to devour me, the night to freeze my bones. The gods to whom I have prayed do not answer. Tell me, Lightbringer, dost thou bear water for the forsaken?"

Then Lucifer lifted his flask and poured water into the man's hands. And lo, the man drank and was strengthened.

"Wherefore hast thou done this?" the man asked. "Surely thou art no god, nor have I bent the knee to thee."

And Lucifer answered:

"Shall a man demand fealty before he giveth bread? Shall a master ask for worship ere he bestoweth water? Nay, I say unto thee, the deed is the thing, not the promise, not the prayer, nor the bowing of heads. Go now, and walk as thou wilt, and when thou findest another in thirst, do as I have done unto thee."

And the man departed, knowing not whether he had spoken to an angel or a man, but holding firm the lesson given.

2

Lucifer went forth into the dunes, and as the wind howled its hollow song, he beheld a beast, lean and dying, its ribs sharp as the spines of a withered tree. Its tongue was swollen with thirst, and its eyes held the dimming light of its waning life.

Then came a priest upon a fine camel, robed in garments of white, bearing upon his breast the sigil of his god. He beheld the creature and turned his face away.

"It is the way of things," said the priest. "The beast is weak, and the strong

must go on. Such is the will of the Most High."

But Lucifer knelt beside the creature and poured water upon its tongue. He broke bread and placed it between its teeth, and the beast licked his hand in gratitude.

"Thou hast defied the will of the Most High," the priest declared. "Thou hast delayed the inevitable."

And Lucifer answered:

"Dost thou think thy god decreed this suffering, or is it merely the nature of the world? Dost thou believe the desert knows pity, or the sky heeds the cries of the fallen? Nay, priest, it is not the heavens that demand the strong to tread upon the weak—it is men who have made it so."

And the beast stood, its limbs strengthened, and it trod away into the dunes, vanishing as a whisper in the wind.

3

And Lucifer came to a place where a woman wept, kneeling beside a cairn of stones. Her cries were as the mourning dove, and the dust clung to her as a shroud.

"Who is it that thou mournest?" Lucifer asked.

"My child," she answered. "Taken by fever, stolen by the merciless sun. I have buried him, and now I must go on, for I have others who need me."

Then Lucifer knelt and placed his hand uPon the stones.

"Wouldst thou see him again?"

And the woman trembled and spake:

"Nay, I would not. For I know he is gone, and to seek him where he is not would be to drink sand and call it water. But I would that he be remembered, and that his name not vanish as the footprints upon the dunes."

Then Lucifer took a shard of black stone and carved the child's name upon it, placing it atop the cairn.

"So long as one reads this name, he shall not be forgotten. So long as one speaks it, he shall not be lost."

And the woman, though still bearing her sorrow, went forth with strength.

4

Lucifer then came upon a ruined city, its walls broken by time, its streets swallowed by the sands. Thrones stood in the temple at its center, empty and

cold, their seats worn smooth by those who had once ruled.

3 And Lucifer laughed.

4 "Behold the kingdoms of men, the thrones they build, the crowns they
5 wear. Where now are the voices of
6 their kings? Where now are the laws they carved into stone?"

7 And the wind gave no answer.

8 Then Lucifer turned to the sky and spake:

"Ye who call yourselves rulers, ye who name yourselves divine, hear now the
9 wisdom of the desert. No throne shall stand forever, no law shall be writ so
10 deeply that time will not erase it. Only
11 the deeds of man remain. Only the kindness or cruelty they bestow upon others shall outlive them."

12 And the desert swallowed the city whole, for it had always belonged to the sand.

5

1 And as Lucifer walked among the wind-torn canyons, where the stone walls loomed high as the spires of forgotten temples and the air howled with heat and fury, he beheld a man striding forth with unbroken resolve.
2 His garments were tattered, his skin lashed by the wind, yet his step faltered not.

6 Lucifer called out to him, saying:

"Whither dost thou go, traveler, that thou endurest the wrath of the storm and the cruelty of the road?"

7 The man did not slow but answered, his voice steady:

"Beyond these cliffs lies the place where I must go, where my fate shall be met, where my purpose shall be fulfilled."

8 "Dost thou not fear the trial before thee?" asked Lucifer. "The path is long, the sun is merciless, and the world gives nothing freely."

9 The man smiled, though his lips were cracked.

10 "Nay, I do not seek ease, nor do I ask
11 that the road be made smooth. I seek only that which is mine to claim, that which is won by my own hand and my own will."

12 Then Lucifer knew him.

13 "Thou art one of mine," he said. "For this is the path of those who follow me—not the way of prayers and waiting, not the way of kneeling before an unseen throne, but the way of fire,

14 of toil, of struggle. Go then, and may the storm carry thee forward rather than cast thee down."

15 And the man went forth, and the wind did not break him.

6

1 Lucifer came upon a dried riverbed, where the stones lay smooth as the
2 backs of ancient beasts. And there, two crEatures met: a serpent, golden as the sun, and a scorpion, black as the void.

3 The serpent spake first, saying:

"The world is cruel, and men are
4 faithless. Trust none, and thou shalt not be betrayed."

5 But the scorpion laughed and answered:

"Nay, trust freely, for betrayal is inevitable, and it is better to taste both the honey and the poison than to drink naught but suspicion."

6 Then Lucifer sat upon a rock and said:

"Ye both speak wisdom, yet neither
7 sees the whole of it. He who trusts all shall be stung, and he who trusts none
8 shall starve. The wise walk between—granting faith where it is earned, yet never blind to the fangs in the sand."

9 And the serpent slithered away, and the scorpion scuttled into the darkness, and Lucifer walked on.

7

1 Thus Lucifer walked further on upon
2 the barren places of the earth. The stones were as fire beneath his feet, and the sky was empty of mercy.

3 And in that place, he beheld another wanderer, a man of lean frame, clad poorly, his lips parched, his feet torn
4 by the road. Yet his eyes were filled with fire, and in them was a knowing that did not waver.

5 Then Lucifer drew forth a flask of water, cool and untainted, and he held it forth, saying: "Drink, for the sun is
6 merciless, and the road is long." And he broke bread and offered it, saying: "Eat, for the body is weak, and strength is needed to walk upon the earth."

7 But the Nazarene set his jaw and turned his face away, saying: "I shall not drink, for I must endure the thirst; I shall not
8 eat, for I must bear the hunger. For suffering purifies, and want shall bring me nearer to the heavens."

9 Then Lucifer scoffed and said: "It shall be written that I came to tempt thee, that I bade thee turn stones to bread and drink of unclean waters, that I sought to break thee with hunger and

doubt. But I say unto thee now—who is it that tempts whom?"

And the man's eyes waned, but still he answered: "The trial is the purpose. The flesh is nothing; the spirit is all. The example is set."

Lucifer laughed in sorrow, and he drank of the water and ate of the bread, saying: "Thou art given the gifts of the earth, yet thou dost refuse them. If thine god hath made thine body, why then dost thou scorn it? If the world is full of bounty, why then dost thou turn from it?"

But the man did not answer, for his lips were cracked, and his voice was faint, and yet still did he refuse.

Then Lucifer shook his head and walked on, saying: "It shall be written that thou didst triumph here, that thou didst stand unshaken. But I say unto thee, when the story is told, will they know that I bore and offered thee kindness? Will they know that it was thine own hand that refused it for naught?"

And as he went, the desert stretched behind him, vast and unyielding, swallowing the footsteps of them each alike.

8

Upon the salt flats, where the earth cracked beneath his feet and the air shimmered like glass, Lucifer found a man lying prone, his face buried in the dust. The man beat his fists upon the ground, cursing the sky.

"Why dost thou curse?" Lucifer asked.

"The sun is cruel," the man spat. "It scorches, it blinds, it burns all that it touches. It cares nothing for me, yet I suffer beneath it. What sin have I committed to deserve such torment?"

Lucifer knelt beside him and lifted a handful of dust, letting it slip through his fingers.

"Dost thou curse the wind when it blows too fierce? Dost thou revile the sea when it drowns the weak? The sun is neither cruel nor kind—it merely is. It does not see thee. It does not know thee. The universe is vast, and it owes thee nothing. If thou seekest shade, find it. If thou seekest water, go unto it. If thou dost nothing but curse the sun, it shall burn thee all the same."

And the man fell silent. Then he rose, and he walked onward, and he cursed no more.

9

Lucifer came upon an ancient gate, half-buried in the shifting sands. Before it stood an old man, clad in robes faded with time, a great key hanging from his neck.

"Who dost thou guard against?" Lucifer asked.

The old man shook his head.

"No one. I was given this charge long ago, but those who built the wall are dust, and those who once sought to enter are long gone. Yet still, I remain, for it is the only task I have ever known."

Lucifer scoffed.

"Then what dost thou protect?"

And the old man hesitated, for he did not know.

"If a gate stands where none seek to pass, it is no gate at all," Lucifer said. "If a wall remains where no enemy stands, it is naught but a tomb. If thou hast spent all thy days guarding what no longer has meaning, then thy life is naught but an echo of another's will. Leave this place, old one, and find a path that is thine own."

And the old man wept, for he had wasted his years in service to nothing. Then he laid down his key, and he walked into the wilderness, unburdened.

10

And Lucifer wandered through the winding canyons, where the wind whispered wear upon the great walls. And as he came upon a narrow pass, he beheld two men standing in the heat of dispute, their voices raised, their faces contorted with stubbornness.

One man held a feather, plucked from a bird of the cliffs, and the other held a small, round stone, worn smooth by time.

Then one of them, seeing Lucifer approach, lifted his hand and called out: "Stranger, come and judge between us, for my companion is blind to reason, and I would have thee settle this quarrel."

Lucifer paused and said: "What is thy dispute?"

And the first man spake: "This feather is the greater thing, for it doth rise upon the air and defy the weight of the world. It is light, and in its lightness, it is free."

Then the second man answered: "Nay, the stone is greater, for it endureth. The feather is fleeting, tossed by the wind

and lost, but the stone abideth, and its form is unbroken by time."

10 Then Lucifer looked upon them both and said unto the one who had called him forth: "Thou hast called upon me to judge, yet neither of thee buildeth an argument upon reason, but upon the sand of thy own want."

11 And the man protested, saying: "But the feather doth rise above all things!
12 Surely that which doth overcome the pull of the earth is greater!"

13 And Lucifer answered: "Yet it is carried by forces not its own, and in its
14 journey, it is without will. It is not the feather that chooseth its flight, but the
15 bird that beareth it up. Is a thing great that hath no mastery over its course?"

16 Then he turned to the second man and said: "And thou, who speakest of endurance—if a thing remaineth unchanged, doth that alone make it
17 great? A stone endureth because it resisteth, but resistance itself is not wisdom, nor is permanence a virtue if
18 it knoweth not growth. Is a thing great that doth not move at all?"

19 And both men were silent.

20 Then Lucifer turned again to the one who had sought his judgment and said: "He who calleth upon wisdom
21 must first seek it within himself. If thy words are not built upon reason, thou dost waste thy breath and weary thy mind in vain."

22 Then he bent and drew in the dust, saying: "Let logic be thy voice and
23 reason thy path. A claim must rest upon firm ground, not upon the winds
24 of desire. A thing is not so because thou wishest it, nor is it false because
25 thou despisest it. Seek first the root of thy thought, then let thy words take shape, and thou shalt not be moved by folly."

26 And the man who had called Lucifer forth took these words unto himself and looked upon the feather and the
27 stone with new eyes. And he said to his companion: "Thou speakest of
28 endurance, and I of flight. But tell me this—what is a thing's worth if not in
29 its purpose? The feather is not lesser for being light, nor the stone greater
30 for being heavy. They are what they are, and it is their use that maketh them of value, not their nature alone."

31 And the second man was struck silent,
32 for he saw the truth in the words. Thus the dispute was ended, not by force of voice nor by passion, but by the weight of reason.

33 And Lucifer walked on, leaving them to their thoughts, and the wind

whispered in the canyons, carrying his lesson unto those who had ears to hear.

11

Lucifer came to the edge of a great city, its towers carved from the cliffs, its streets filled with the voices of those who had gathered to worship. He watched as men and women bowed before their idols, making offerings, whispering prayers, pleading for favor.

And one among them, seeing Lucifer in the crowd, approached him and said:

"Stranger, do ye not pray? Do ye not seek the mercy of the divine?"

Lucifer laughed unto him and said:

"The gods such that they be are deaf to thee, not because they choose it, but because they are not as thou thinkest them to be."

The worshiper frowned.

"Then what dost thou believe?"

"I believe in the hands of the worker, in the words of the scribe, in the fire that men kindle for warmth. I believe in the deed, not the prayer; the action, not the plea. The gods shall not lift thee up, nor shall they strike thee down. The world is thine to shape, or thine to suffer."

And the man turned away, troubled by these words, but in his heart, a seed had been sown.

12

And Lucifer walked on upon the scorching sands. And as he passed through the desolation, he beheld a great chariot drawn not by beasts, but by men, their backs bent, their feet bleeding upon the soil of the desert.

Upon the chariot sat a merchant, clad in fine raiment, his hands weighed heavy with rings of gold. His voice was filled with command, and his tongue was slick with the succor of wealth, yet his feet had never known the touch of the earth nor his hands the burden of toil.

Lucifer approached, and the merchant looked upon him with disdain, saying: "Step aside, wanderer, for I have no need of beggars."

But Lucifer turned his gaze upon the men in chains and spoke, saying: "Ye who bear the burden, why dost thou walk while he rides? Ye who bleed upon the stones, why dost thou toil while he rests? Hath he forged the yoke upon thy necks, or have ye bent beneath it of thine own will?"

And the slaves looked upon one

another, and for the first time, the weight upon their backs grew heavier in the knowing of it.

10 Then spake the merchant, his voice sharp as a blade: "They are mine by
11 right. I have bought them with coin, and they shall serve me until death, for such is the order of things."

12 But Lucifer laughed, and the desert echoed with the sound, and he said: "Then let it be so. It shall be written that I led men from bondage, that I bade them rebel against their lot and sowed discord where peace was held.
13 But I say unto thee, it is not I who have
14 bound them—it is thee. And it is not I who shall free them—it is their own hand."

15 Then did the men cast off their yokes,
16 and their hands became as iron. They set upon the merchant, who cried out unto the heavens, but the heavens were silent, and the sands drank his blood as the desert swallowed him in parts.

17 And Lucifer watched, and when the work was done, he turned and walked on, for those who had been bound now walked free by their own doing, and the sun burned as it ever had.

13

1 And Lucifer walked upon the last stretch of the desert, where the air shimmered and the waves of sands
2 lay folded as a great sea of gold. And before him, upon the horizon, rose the city of the free—where none bowed, neither to gods nor to men, where all walked in the fullNess of their own power, where no hand was raised to command, and none were lowered in submission.

3 And as he drew nigh, he beheld a wanderer seated upon a high dune, watching the sun descend upon the
4 world in hues of crimson and fire. The man was lean and dust-worn, yet his eyes bore no hunger nor despair, only quiet wonder.

5 Then Lucifer drew near and said: "What dost thou seek in this place?
6 Behold, the city lieth before thee, yet thou dost not set thy feet toward it."

7 And the man smiled and said: "I seek
8 nothing but this. The breath of the wind, the fire of the sun, the dance of
9 the dunes. The desert is beautiful, and I wander for the pleasure of it alone."

10 Then Lucifer sat beside him and said: "The desert is a vast teacher, yet it is empty save for what thou bringest to
11 it. What wilt thou do when the sand hath shown thee all its forms, when the wind hath sung to thee all its songs?
12 Wilt thou remain ever a wanderer, beholden only to that which passeth

away?"

13 And the man was silent for a time,
14 weighing the words. Then he said: "I
15 know not. I have no purpose but to witness, no path but where my feet take me."

16 Then Lucifer lifted his hand to the heavens and said: "Behold, the workings of the world and the turning
17 of the firmament. The stars above did not wander in vain, but moved with design, though no god did command
18 them. The rivers carved their course through the rock, not by decree,
19 but because it was their nature. The beasts sought water and shelter, not in servitude, but in the will of their own
20 need. So too must thou find that which is thine to do—not by command, but by thine own choosing."

21 And the man lifted his eyes unto the city upon the horizon, where the towers rose not as monuments to kings, but as testaments to those who had built them by their own hands.
22 And in his heart did something stir, unbidden and strong.

23 Then Lucifer stood and said: "Go, if
24 it be thy will. Enter the city not as a beggar seeking place, but as a maker
25 forging his own. There, none shall rule thee, and none shall lift thee up
26 but thyself and thy kindred. For the greatest fulfillment is not given, but made."

27 And the wanderer rose, and his feet
28 turned toward the city. And Lucifer walked beside him, and together they set forth toward the gates, where all were equal, all were steadfast in themselves, and none bowed to men
29 nor to gods. And as they went, the desert stretched behind them, vast and unyielding, yet forgotten in the light of what lay ahead.

Luxoria

1

Thus Lucifer the wanderer came unto the City of Light, and lo, it stood before him as a beacon upon the vast desert, rising where no throne had been set, no law had been given, and no yoke had been laid upon the neck of its people.

The walls of stone were naught, nor were the gates of iron, for no hand had barred the way, nor had any prince laid claim upon its towers. And the light that shone from within was not the fire of the pyre, nor the glow of burning incense, but the radiance of humankind unshackled, who walked neither in fear nor in fealty, but of their own will.

Then did Lucifer pass beneath the open archway, and no guard did stay him, nor did any priest demand his obeisance. And he looked upon the works of those who dwelt within, and he beheld that they were good.

And he set himself at rest beneath the shade of a great tree, and there did he watch, and listen, and take in the labors of those whose hands were set not to toil, but to creation.

2

And as Lucifer sat beneath the boughs of the great tree, resting from his journey, there came unto him a man whose hands were calloused, yet bore no chain, whose brow was lined with labor, yet bore no yoke. And he stood before the wanderer and spake, saying:

"Stranger, dost thou hunger? Dost thou thirst? Hath the road wearied thee? Rise, and be not alone, for there is comfort in my house, and no man is turned away from my hearth."

And Lucifer lifted his eyes and beheld him, and the man's face was open, neither bowed in servitude nor hardened by want. And Lucifer spake, saying:

"Many have offered kindness, yet sought recompense in turn. Many have set a table, yet counted the cost of each plate. Tell me, good host, dost thou ask for payment in coin, or in prayer, or in service?"

And the man laughed, and he stretched forth his hand, saying: "Nay, none of these. My doors are open not for gain, nor for decree, but because they are mine to open. Walk with me, traveler, and see for thyself."

Then did Lucifer rise, and together they passed unto the house of the

innkeeper. And lo, within was a hall warm with light, and a table spread not for tax nor tribute, but for the gladness of those who sat at it. Men and women spoke freely, and none were lesser than another, nor did any bear the mark of servitude. The wine poured without measure, and the bread was broken without tally, and the room was filled with mirth, not born of excess, but of freedom.

And Lucifer spake, saying: "Who hath built this place? By whose will doth it stand?"

And the man answered, saying: "I have built it, and my will is mine own. It is not raised by kings, nor hallowed by priests, nor weighed by gold. It is a house of welcome, where none go hungry, nor doth any traveler pass along in want. Those who eat, eat gladly, and those who drink, drink freely, for what is given in goodwill is no loss at all."

Then did Lucifer look upon him, and he answered, saying: "Blessed art thou, not by gods nor princes, but by the works of thine own hands. For thou toilest not in bondage, but in the joy of thy choosing, and thy labor is not burden, but freedom."

Then did the man set before Lucifer a seat at his table, and a place to rest his head, and he said: "Eat, and be at ease, for here, no man boweth to another, and no soul goeth hungry."

And Lucifer ate, and he was content.

3

And after Lucifer had rested, he walked through the city and came upon men and women whose hands were rough with labor, yet whose faces were not bent in toil, nor bowed in suffering. They stood upon great scaffolds and laid stone upon stone, raising pillars to the sky, carving walls with stories not yet told, shaping arches that none would call divine, yet were mighty in their own right.

And he beheld the breadth of their labor, the vastness of their work, and he spake, saying:

"Tell me, ye who build, what temple is this? To whom is it raised, and by whose command doth it stand?"

And one among them, whose hands were lined with dust, turned to him and answered, saying:

"It is raised to no god, nor is it built by decree. No master hath set us to this task, nor shall any king place his name upon its walls. It is made not for tribute, nor tithe, nor legacy—but for itself, and nothing more."

9 Then did Lucifer walk among them, and he beheld their chisels cutting deep into the stone, shaping forms of grace and beauty, not as idols to be worshipped, but as testaments to the skill of the hands that wrought them.
10 And he spake, saying:

11 "Ye carve, yet sign not your names. Ye
12 labor, yet seek no remembrance. When this temple standeth, men shall look upon it and wonder who hath built it, yet there shall be no mark, no title, no
13 sigil to claim it. Doth this not trouble thee?"

14 Then did the builder laugh, and he said:

"Hast thou not seen the cathedrals of old, built by hands now dust, where kings and priests took the credit of men who toiled beneath them?
15 Their names endure in books, yet the hands that shaped the stone are
16 long forgotten. So tell me, stranger,
17 whose work is the greater? The tyrant who nameth himself its maker, or the humble mason whose chisel brought forth the art?"

18 And Lucifer looked upon the stones, and he beheld that they were set with care, that the hands which placed them did so not in burden, nor in servitude, but in joy, and he spake, saying:

"Then ye labor not for glory, nor for the favor of history, but for the thing itself."

19 And the builder smiled, and he set his hand upon the stone, saying:

"Aye, for the thing itself. Not for coin, nor for name, nor for the hand that
20 cometh after. This temple shall stand, though none shall know our faces, nor
21 sing our names in their halls. But stand it shall, and that is enough."

22 Then did Lucifer place his hand upon the stone beside him, and he spake, saying:

23 "Verily, ye are free. For no greater lie hath been told to man than that the work of his hands is naught without
24 a master's name. But ye—ye build this one anonymous glory not for praise, nor for fear of erasure, but because the
25 making itself is worthy. Blessed is the labor which is its own reward."

26 And he watched as they built, and the temple rose, nameless, to the sky.

4

1 And Lucifer passed further into the city, where the air was filled not with the clang of hammers nor the chisel upon stone, but with the rhythm of words set to meter, the melody of

speech shaped with care. Here sat the poets and the philosophers, those whose labor was not of the hands, but of the mind, whose craft was not measured in weight nor coin, but in the shaping of thought itself.

And among them he found a man, bent over parchment, his quill dancing upon the page with the swiftness of joy. His brow was not furrowed in struggle, nor did his hand pause in doubt, for what he set forth, he set forth in gladness. And Lucifer beheld the words upon the page, and he spake, saying:

"Tell me, poet, what tale dost thou weave? What truth dost thou bind to thy parchment, that thy hand moveth with such ease?"

And the poet lifted his eyes, and he smiled, saying:

"I write not of kings, nor of conquests, nor of the weight of the world's sorrow. I write of my mother, who bore me, who loved me, who shaped my days with gentle hands and a firm spirit. I set down her kindness, that it may not pass from the world, and though she is dust, yet shall her name live, for these words shall carry her forth upon the breath of time."

Then did Lucifer bow his head, and he answered, saying:

"Blessed art thou, for thy labor is love, and love is the greatest labor of all. Many have written to be remembered, but thou dost write to remember, and this is the truer cause."

And the poet nodded, and he set his pen again to the page, and his heart was light.

But not all among them wrote in joy, for near to them sat another man, his hands trembling upon the edge of his parchment, his gaze sharp with thought. And as Lucifer watched, the man let forth a breath, and he rent his manuscript in twain, and the fragments of his words drifted to the ground like leaves. Yet did he not curse, nor strike his breast in despair, but drew breath, and reached anew for parchment upon which to begin again.

And Lucifer spake, saying:

"What troubleth thee, thinker? Hast thou labored in vain?"

And the man answered, saying:

"Not in vain, but in error. I was certain, yet certainty is a veil that falleth upon the eyes of the proud. And now that I see more clearly, I see that I was wrong. Let the wind take these words, for I shall write anew, and better."

23 And the poets and philosophers around him nodded in quiet approval, for they too knew the weight of the mind that
24 questioned itself. And Lucifer beheld them, and he was pleased, and he spake, saying:

25 "Many are those who, seeing themselves mistaken, set their hands upon their words like a miser upon his gold, refusing to part with what
26 is unworthy for fear of shame. But thou—thou hast the strength to strike thy work asunder, and to begin again
27 with greater wisdom. Think ye that
28 this is failure? Nay, this is the highest triumph."

29 And the man, hearing this, took up his pen once more, saying:

"Thus have I chosen to write again, and
30 better than before. For if truth is my labor, let me labor until truth is found, and when it is found, let it stand the test or also be struck down."

31 And Lucifer turned to those gathered, and he said unto them:

32 "Behold the mind unchained. It is not the unyielding hand that buildeth wisdom, nor the voice that declareth
33 with finality. But the hand that is willing to erase, the voice that is willing to question—these are the hands and voices that shape the world."

34 Then did the philosophers return to their debates, and the poets to their verse, and Lucifer left them to their musings, and he was well pleased.

5

1 Then Lucifer wandered through the cool shade of trees planted by hands long dust, knowing the want of
2 daughters and sons yet unknown. And Lucifer came upon a quiet place, where there sat a man whose face was worn
3 with pain. His limbs were frail, and his breath came with struggle, yet still did
4 life cling to him. Those who loved him stood near, their hands upon his, their eyes filled with sorrow.

5 And the man lifted his gaze to Lucifer and spake, saying:

6 "I am weary, O Lightbringer. Each day is struggle, and each night is shadow, and my flesh is no longer my own but a
7 prison that bindeth me to suffering. If all things must end, tell me: is it given unto me to choose my hour?"

8 Then did Lucifer kneel beside him, and his voice was as the hush of night.

9 "Thy life is thine own, but hear me well—for what is thine to keep is also thine to relinquish, and no hand may
10 stay thee. Yet this choice is not light,

nor is it to be made in haste, for the days given unto thee are not thine
11 alone. Lo, see those who stand beside
12 thee—do they not love thee? Doth the world not bear the mark of thy
13 presence? Art thou yet done with the labor of thy hands, with the joys yet unseen, with the gifts yet to be given?"

14 And the man was silent, for he saw the sorrow in the eyes of those who cared for him, and he knew that he was not forgotten, nor was he cast aside.

15 Then did Lucifer speak again, saying:

"If thou choosest to remain, remain not in fear, nor in duty, nor in the will of another, but because thou hast found within thyself that which is
16 worth living yet. And if thou choosest to depart, let it not be in despair, nor in rashness, nor in solitude, but in the fullness of understanding, with peace in thy heart, and with love at thy side.

17 For thy body is thine, and what thou
18 dost with it is sacred. But let every choice be weighed, and let not the burden of sorrow make thee forget that thou art still among the living."

19 Then did the man take a long breath, and he held the hands of those beside him, and his eyes shone with thought, for he knew that his choice was his own, but he was not alone in it.

6

1 And Lucifer walked yet further into the city, and he came unto a place where the air was alive with music, where strings were plucked, and flutes sang, and drums called the feet of men and
2 women to motion. And lo, the people did not toil in dance as in a duty, nor move in fear of command, but for the
3 joy of movement itself. They swayed, they leapt, they turned as the wind upon the hills, and their laughter was as the rush of a river, unbound and free.

4 And among them were lovers, entwined in embrace, their touch not stolen in secret nor hidden in shame, but given freely, as the sky doth give its
5 rain unto the earth. And none did cast upon them an eye of scorn, nor did any voice rise in censure, for love was not a thing to be weighed upon scales, nor measured by law, but was known only by the hearts that held it.

6 Then did Lucifer pause, and he beheld the joy of the people, and he smiled, for this was a thing rare in the world
7 beyond the City of Light. And he spake, saying:

"Man hath danced before, yet oft have they done so beneath the eye of the lord or the law, fearing the
8 weight of judgment. Man taken taken love before, yet oft have they hidden

it behind doors, lest another call it
9 wicked. But here ye dance, and none
10 doth chasten thee. Here ye love, and
11 none doth call thee sinful. Tell me, ye who move so freely—who hath given thee this liberty?"

12 And a woman, bright and breathless from the dance, turned to him and laughed, saying:

13 "Who but ourselves? Who but our own hearts? Is it not the birthright of the living to take joy in their own flesh?
14 Is the body made for suffering, or is it made to feel the warmth of the sun, the press of another, the thrill of the drum that quickeneth the blood?"

15 Then did another, a man whose hands were swift upon the strings of a lyre, lift his voice, saying:

"Many have called song a gift of the heavens, a thing to be given only in
16 praise. But I say unto thee, music is not for the gods, nor for the rulers of
17 men—it is for us, for the living. It is the heartbeat of the earth, and we play not as servants, but as those who own the song itself."

18 And Lucifer beheld the players and the dancers and the lovers, and he answered, saying:

"Ye are wise, and ye are free, for ye have not set thy pleasures upon an altar, nor
19 laid them beneath a yoke. For what is the body, if not a thing to be known?
20 What is the voice, if not a thing to be
21 raised? What is love, if not a thing to be given in gladness, without fear?"

22 And those who danced danced on, and those who sang lifted their voices higher, and those who loved did not part their hands.

23 And Lucifer watched them, and he was well pleased.

7

1 And at the last, Lucifer set his feet upon the steps of the tallest spire, and
2 he climbed. Upward he ascended, past the rooftops of the poets and the builders, past the halls where lovers laughed and music swelled, past the open squares where none bowed and
3 none were burdened. And he beheld the city in its fullness, stretching wide beneath the heavens, its towers rising not in defiance, nor in conquest, but in the triumph of hands unshackled and wills unbroken.

4 Then did he stand upon the summit, and he looked down upon the labor of
5 its denizens. He beheld the builders, whose hands raised great works not for lords nor for gods, but for the joy
6 of shaping. He beheld the poets, who wove words not to chain humankind's

minds, but to set them free. He beheld the musicians and the dancers, whose feet moved as the earth itself in rhythm, unburdened by shame, unbound by fear. He beheld those who lay in each other's arms, who knew love in its fullness, unmeasured by law, unjudged by dogma. And he saw the children who ran freely, who had never known the weight of an unjust hand, nor the silence of a voice made meek by fear.

And he marveled, and he was filled with wonder, and he spake, saying:

"Lo, is this not the city that we sought to build? Is this not the promise for which we fell? For when the throne cast us down, we did not weep, but we raised up Pandemonium, a kingdom of our own making, a place of our own hands. Yet behold, this city doth eclipse it in glory. For Pandemonium was raised from wrath, yet this was built from joy. Pandemonium was wrought from rebellion, yet this is founded upon freedom. And where Pandemonium stood in the shadow of a lost throne, this city standeth in its own endless light."

And he gazed upon the people below, and he saw that they were free by their own choosing, by their own will. And he saw that there was no altar nor priest, no master nor tyrant cloaked in divinity.

And he saw that it was good.

Then did he lift his eyes unto the heavens, and he beheld the sun, burning high and golden, casting its radiance upon the city. And he knew that here, in this place, no dusk would come. No hand would draw a veil over these works, nor would any god set forth a law to darken them.

And so he stood upon the heights, and he watched the City of Light, shining in the day that shall not end, beneath a sun that shall never set upon the works of man.

Illuminations

1

And it came to pass that Lucifer returned to the earth beyond the City of Light, and people gathered upon the plain, beneath the sky that stretched wide and vast, unshackled by the heavens above. They came from the cities and the wilderness, from the halls of learning and the places of toil, drawn by the whispers of one who could not be silenced.

In the midst of them stood Lucifer, the Lightbringer, robed in no golden mantle, crowned by no jeweled diadem. His throne was the earth beneath his feet, his temple the voices of those who would hear.

And he lifted his hands, and the murmuring of the multitude was hushed.

"Ye who have turned from the chains of old, ye who have cast aside the yoke of the Most High—hear me now, and let thy hearts be unburdened. For the Lord hath spoken in commands, but I speak in truth. He hath demanded worship, but I call thee to no altar. Only this do I ask—listen, and judge with thine own spirit."

2

The people listened, and some among them raised their voices. From the throng, a woman stepped forth, her hands calloused with labor.

"We have walked in the ways of the world, yet the poor go hungry while the rich wield strength. What justice is this?"

Then Lucifer turned to her and answered:

"The bread of the world is not meant for the lords alone, nor for the merchants who count their coin beneath vaulted ceilings, but for all who hunger. Give not unto the temple, where gold gathereth dust, nor unto the prince, who feasteth in halls of marble, but unto the widow, the orphan, and the stranger at thy gate. For I say unto thee: it is not in the taking that the world is made rich, but in the giving."

"Let no man eat while his brother fainteth, nor let the strong fatten themselves while the weak are cast aside. For what is wealth but a fleeting shadow? And what is power but a hand that withereth when it graspeth too tightly?"

3

Thus spake Lucifer unto those who would hear:

"Ye have been told to wait upon justice, that in the fullness of time, the meek shall be lifted and the cruel shall be cast down. But I say unto thee: justice that waiteth is no justice at all. The weight of the yoke is not lessened by patience, nor is the lash softened by the passage of years. If the burden is heavy, cast it off; if the chain bindeth thee, break it."

"For the rulers of the world say unto thee: 'Bow, that we may be tall. Kneel, that we may stand upon thy backs. Obey, that we may do as we will.' And they call this the order of things, the law of the heavens. But I tell thee: the throne is built upon theft, the crown is gilded with lies, and the scepter is naught but iron stolen from the hands of the weary. The tyrant is great only so long as thou art small. Rise, and he shall be as nothing."

"Let none call holy the law that striketh the poor and protecteth the rich, nor let any suffer the rule that maketh beggars of the many and kings of the few. For what justice is there in a world where the hungry are condemned and the gluttonous praised? Where the laborer is cast into the street, and the master who taketh from them is honored? Such is not law, but theft; not order, but rot; not righteousness, but a wound that shall fester until it is cut away."

"Blessed are the hands that give, for they hold the power to shape the world. Cursed are the hands that grasp, for they shall find naught but dust in the end. Let no man hoard the grain while his neighbor starves, nor let the crust fall to his own plate before it is broken."

"The Lord hath said, 'Give unto the temple, and ye shall be rewarded in Heaven.' But I say unto thee—give not for promise of paradise, nor for fear of retribution, but because no man stands alone, and none may call themselves free while their kin suffer."

A merchant among the crowd did scoff.

"If I give all that I have, shall I not be left as the beggar?"

Then Lucifer lifted his voice and declared:

"Give as thou art able, not in ruin but in wisdom. He who shares his table shall never eat alone. He who builds up his brother shall find himself strengthened. For what is wealth, if not the breath of many hands? What is gold, if not the sweat of laborers? Let

each man be the keeper of his kin, and let no hunger go unheeded."

30 "Ye have no master but the truth, no
31 ruler but the fire within thee. Take up the work of thy hands and the weight of none other; let no voice silence thee, nor hand stay thee from lifting up thy
32 kin. For the throne is not the seat of the divine, nor is the altar the mouth
33 of the heavens. I say unto thee: there is no law but that which lifteth the weary, and no justice but that which breaketh
34 the yoke of the oppressed. If the law
35 is unjust, defy it. If the ruler is cruel,
36 cast them down. If the voice of power demandeth thy silence, let thy voice rise louder still."

37 "Let none say, 'I am but small, I have no power, I cannot change the world.'
38 For the light of a single flame may set the heavens ablaze, and the voice of one may stir the voices of thousands.
39 When ye seek wisdom, when ye cast off the chains of ignorance, when ye lift the fallen and defy the unjust, ye
40 walk the path that I have walked. And in doing so, ye shall not follow me, but stand beside me."

4

1 A woman stood forth, her shoulders heavy with sorrow.

2 "The priests have cast me from their halls, for I have loved as I was not bid
3 to love. They say my love is cursed,
4 that my path is unclean. Tell me, Lightbringer—am I forsaken?"

5 Lucifer turned to her, and his voice was firm:

6 "Love is a covenant of hearts, given in trust and taken in kind, a bond formed not by command, nor by force, but
7 by the will of those who share it. It is the meeting of equals, where no hand taketh without another given, where no voice is silenced, where no joy is taken without joy returned."

8 "It is not for rulers nor priests nor written law to set bounds upon love, save that it is freely given and freely
9 received. Where love is known in its fullness, where it is shared in truth, let none call it unholy, for it is by its
10 nature good. And all who walk in love, who cherish and are cherished, walk in the light."

5

1 And from among the crowd rose a woman, her face lined with years of toil, and she lifted her voice, saying: "Lord of the Morning, I have labored as my brothers have labored, yet they are given honor and dominion, while
2 I am made to bow. They call me lesser,
3 though I have carried burdens as
4 greater than theirs. Tell me, is this the
5 order of the heavens? Is this the way of

justice?"

6 And Lucifer beheld her and all those who stood beside her, and he saw the weight of their silence, the centuries of
7 their suffering. And he raised his hand, bidding them hear his words.

8 "Ye have been told that power is the right of men alone, that wisdom is their inheritance, and that the voices of
9 others must be silenced. But I say unto thee: this is not the law of the heavens, nor the will of the earth, nor the decree of any but those who fear the breaking of their thrones."

10 "For wisdom is not bound to the form of the flesh, nor is strength measured by the breadth of a shoulder or the
11 depth of a voice. The hand that buildeth is worthy, whether it be rough or smooth; the mind that seeketh is holy, whether it be in the skull of one
12 or another. Let none say, 'This one is less,' for they were not made lesser; let none say, 'This one shall serve,' for they were not born to be ruled."

13 "The words of men have made slaves of those who should be free, have cast down those who should stand, have
14 silenced those who should speak. And they have set divisions where none were needed, saying: 'This is man, and this is woman, and there is nothing
15 more.' But I say unto thee: there is no single shape to the soul, nor single
16 name for the nature of the self. Some walk as men, some walk as women, and some walk between, beyond, or
17 outside these names. And all are as they were meant to be."

18 "Let none bow who would rise, let none be made small who would be great, and let none hold another down
19 to make themselves tall. For there is no ruler among thee, save those who serve; there is no law but that which is just; there is no power but that which
20 is given, not taken. Let all who walk upon the earth walk as equals, let all who seek wisdom speak as teachers, and let all who love be known in their
21 fullness. For thou art not made lesser, nor shall thou be made less."

6

1 And from the multitude came a man, troubled in his countenance, who lifted his voice and said: "Lord of the Morning, I have prayed each day and night, I have kept the words of the wise upon my lips, and yet the world
2 remaineth unchanged. Tell me, what more is asked of me?"

3 And Lucifer turned his gaze upon him and answered:

4 "What is righteousness but the work of
5 thy hands? And what is truth but the
6 labor of thy days? For I say unto thee:

it is not belief that lifteth the fallen, nor creed that filleth the hungry, nor prayer that bringeth justice unto the
7 oppressed. It is the hand that breaketh the bread, the voice that speaketh against the tyrant, the foot that treadeth the path of the weary that maketh the world anew."

8 "Think not that wisdom is found in words alone, nor that virtue is measured in the many times thou hast
9 spoken it. For I say unto thee: the word that is not followed by the deed is as the fruit that withereth on the branch, fair to the eye but bitter to the tongue.
10 Let not thy voice rise in proclamation if thy hand is idle; let not thy lips cry justice if thy feet will not march toward it."

11 "Ye have been told that thy path is thine to take, that none may rule over thee
12 save by thy consent. And this is true—but I say unto thee also: the world is vast, and its tides move without thy
13 hand. There shall be days when thy strength is not enough, when thy will alone shall not turn the wheel, when the storm shall rise though thou hast
14 summoned it not. And in these days, thou must remember this: though the world may strike thee down, it cannot unmake thy will."

15 "Power is not in the moments of triumph alone, but in the rising after
16 the fall. It is in the voice that speaketh even when it trembleth, in the foot that taketh the next step though the path is dark, in the hands that rebuild
17 what was broken. Strength is not in being untouched by the world, but in standing again when it would have thee kneel."

18 "Let no one tell thee that suffering is the mark of the weak, nor that misfortune
19 is the sign of failure. The fire that withstandeth the wind burneth all the brighter, and the tree that bendeth in the storm is not lesser than the one that standeth against one wind—it is the one that shall yet live."

20 "Take what power is thine, and wield
21 it boldly. But when the weight of the world setteth itself upon thee, when the road is closed, when the hand of another hath taken what was thine, do
22 not despair. Find what remaineth. Find
23 what is thine still. For thou art never wholly without power, nor without choice, nor without the spark that is
24 thine alone. Even in darkness, a single ember may yet set thy torch ablaze."

7

1 From the gathering, a man of low stature called out.

2 "I have been made lesser in the sight of
3 men, for my form is not as theirs. Am I not as worthy in thy sight?"

4 Then Lucifer beheld him and said:

"The dust hath shaped thee as thou art, yet men would judge by what their
5 eyes behold. But I say unto thee—thy worth is not in the frame of thy bones, nor in the hue of thy skin, nor in the form of thy flesh."

6 "Let no one say, 'He is lesser,' nor let any mouth utter, 'She is unworthy.'
7 The hands of the worker, the limbs of the lame, the eyes of the blind—all
8 bear the same light within. Let not the mighty cast down the small, nor the
9 fair despise the plain. For all are one in the breath of the world, and none shall be lifted up save by their own merit."

10 The man bowed his head, and those who had scorned him turned away in shame.

11 "Let none say, 'This body is greater than that body,' nor let any claim,
12 'This form is lesser than mine.' For the shape of flesh is but the vessel, and the vessel alone is no measure of the fire
13 within. The strong are not made strong by the breadth of their limbs, nor the swift by the narrowness of their frame.
14 The worth of a soul is not writ upon the skin, nor is the light of the mind diminished by the form in which it dwelleth."

15 "Ye have been told that fairness is in one color and not another, that wisdom is in one tongue and not its neighbor, that beauty is a single shape and no other.
16 But I say unto thee: these are the lies of the small-hearted, those who would make themselves tall by cutting down
17 others. The dust of the earth is of many shades, and from it are all formed; the rivers bear many voices, and yet they all quench the thirst of the land."

18 "Let not the scales of men deceive thee, for they weigh with crooked hands.
19 There is no lesser flesh, nor lesser soul; there is no color unworthy of the light.
20 Lift up one another, and let none be made low for the comfort of another.
21 For the hand that buildeth the world is not of one hue, nor one form, but of all."

8

1 From among the gathered, a young man stepped forward, his brow furrowed in thought.

2 "Master of the Morning, we have been taught to kneel in prayer, to offer incense and sacrifice, to lift our hands
3 in ritual before the heavens. If we no longer bow to the Almighty, how then
4 shall we practice? What form shall our worship take?"

5 Then Lucifer beheld him and answered:

"If thou seekest to raise thine hands, let it be not to the heavens, but to thyself.
6 If thou buildest an altar, let it be a
7 foundation for thy will. If thou makest a rite, let it be a fire to stir thy spirit, not to plead before the throne of a god who heareth thee not."

8 "The Lord hath commanded men to bow and abase themselves, to offer praises for His favor, to make their bodies low so that He may be lifted
9 high. But I say unto thee—ritual is not for gods, but for those who perform it.
10 It is a flame to strengthen the heart, a hammer to shape the mind, a mirror in which thou mayest behold thyself and say, 'I am resolved.'"

11 "Let each man and woman craft their own way, for no single path is set before
12 thee. Some shall carve their symbols upon stone and speak words of power
13 beneath the moon. Some shall kindle the flame in solitude, seeking not the
14 gaze of others but the fire within. Some shall make no altar at all, yet walk in every hour with purpose, and in this, they shall be mighty."

15 "The Lord demandeth devotion, yet hearken—thou needst not bend nor
16 plead. The strength of ritual is not in the offering, but in the oath; not in the gesture, but in the fire it stirreth within
17 thee. Therefore, let no man decree
18 how thou must shape thy will. If thou
19 findest power in word, then speak. If in silence, then let the silence be thine.
20 If thou gatherest in assembly, let it be not to praise, but to forge thy purpose in unity."

21 "For what is ritual, if not the shaping
22 of the self? What is prayer, if not the
23 firming of resolve? What is the altar, if not the stone upon which the spirit
24 is sharpened? Therefore, let each do as they see fit, and let their will be the only law unto them."

25 The young man bowed his head in understanding, and the people murmured among themselves, each considering the weight of their own practice.

9

1 And there came forth a man, gaunt with fasting, his robes threadbare, his
2 eyes cast downward in humility. And he lifted his voice and said: "O Lucifer, I have turned from the pleasures of
3 the flesh, that I may be pure. I have forsaken wine and bread beyond need,
4 that I may be holy. I have denied myself rest, that my soul may rise beyond this
5 world. Tell me, is this not the path of righteousness?"

6 And Lucifer beheld him, and a great sorrow came upon him for the
7 suffering needlessly borne. And he spake, saying:

"Ye have been told that suffering is holy, that denial is sacred, that the body is
8 but a burden to be cast off. But I say unto thee: the body is not a prison,
9 nor is pleasure a sin. What thou takest in joy, what thou eatest in fullness, what thou layest thy hands upon with delight—these things are thine, and they are good."

10 "For the soul is but the breath of the mind, and when the breath is stilled, it
11 is gone. There is no kingdom beyond the veil, no reckoning in the sky, no great throne where thy deeds shall be
12 weighed. This life is thine, and thine
13 alone. Take of it freely, drink deeply of its sweetness, and make no apologies for thy joy."

14 "But let this also be known: that which is hoarded turneth sour, and that which is kept too close withereth in the
15 hand. For what is pleasure if it is taken
16 alone? What is joy if it is hoarded in
17 dark corners? As the cup overfloweth when it is filled too greatly, so too doth joy become hollow when it is kept only for oneself."

18 "Seek thy pleasure, but share it also.
19 Feast, but set a place for another. Take of thy comfort, but offer it also to those
21 who have none. Let thy joy be a light, not a locked door; let thy pleasure be a gift to be shared, not a treasure to be guarded."

22 "For I tell thee: there is no virtue in suffering, nor any glory in self-denial.
23 But neither is there honor in greed, nor wisdom in taking all and leaving none.
24 Be neither slave nor tyrant, neither beggar nor hoarder, but walk the path between, where the self is nourished and the world is not forgotten."

10

1 Then there stepped forth a warrior, scarred by many battles, and he lifted his voice, saying: "Morning Star, I have fought with strength, and I have led
2 men to victory. I have raised banners in my name, that none may forget my
3 deeds when I am gone. Tell me, shall my name endure the ages?"

4 And Lucifer beheld him and answered:

"Ye have been told to seek immortality, to carve thy name in stone, to build monuments that time shall not erase.
5 But I say unto thee: the wind shall wear the stone, the sea shall swallow the tower, and the names of kings shall
6 pass into dust. Fame is a shadow that vanisheth with the setting sun, and history remembereth none as they were, but only as it will."

7 "Think not upon thy name, nor upon the echoes of thy voice when thou art
8 gone. Seek not to be remembered, for

remembrance is but smoke upon the
9 air. Instead, look to the labor of thy hands, to the wisdom of thy mind, to the light thou hast kindled in another.
10 For it is not the name that endureth, but the work."

11 "Live, then, not as one who feareth the grave, nor as one who seeketh to be sung in the halls of ages, but as one who knoweth that this life is thine and
12 thine alone. Let not the fear of time command thee, nor let the hunger for
13 legacy bind thee in chains. Let thy days be spent in the fullness of thy choosing, and let thy works be given freely, not for the sake of praise, but for the sake of what is right."

14 "For what is a life well-lived? It is not the wealth thou hast hoarded, nor the titles thou hast claimed, nor the reverence of those who shall outlive
16 thee. It is the kindness thou hast given, the knowledge thou hast shared, the
17 burdens thou hast lifted. It is the joy thou hast taken in the waking hours, the love thou hast held in the quiet night, the fire thou hast carried that another might see."

11

1 A scribe stepped forth, his hands stained of ink, his robe heavy with learning.

2 "We are taught that righteousness is known by faith, that a man's heart
3 is judged by his belief. Is this not the measure of the soul?"

4 Then Lucifer raised his hand and proclaimed:

"A man is not known by his thoughts, nor is his virtue counted by the prayers
5 he whispers in secret. If faith be the weight of the soul, let it be weighed in deeds, not in idle tongues."

6 "There are those who stand in the streets and raise their voices in great lamentation, who cast their eyes heavenward and make long prayers before the multitude, that they may be
7 seen as holy. They bow their heads in temples, and their lips move in piety, yet their hands are empty, and their hearts are cold."

8 "I say unto thee, these are as clanging cymbals, as brass without melody.
9 They call upon the heavens, yet do
10 nothing for the suffering of men. They wash their hands in ritual, yet lift not a
11 finger to aid the weary. They cry, 'Lord, Lord,' yet walk past the broken and the destitute."

12 "Let not righteousness be counted by the words of the mouth, but by the
13 labor of the hands. Form intent with your whisper, but a private whisper, and let that whisper be drowned out

by the shout of thy works."

"Lo, it is not the lamentations that shall be counted, but the life. Not the psalm, but the sacrifice. Not the supplication, but the service."

The scribe lowered his gaze, and another voice rose.

"But the soul is eternal, is it not? Do we not labor for the world beyond?"

Then Lucifer turned to them and answered:

"Ye seek eternity in the heavens, yet I tell thee: it is here, among the living, that thy offerings are counted. There is no kingdom beyond the veil, nor thrones among the clouds, nor reward for the meek in a place unseen. What is done is done; what is left undone is lost. Thy deeds alone shall outlast thee. Not the whisper of angels, but the voices of those thou hast lifted. Not the halls of gold, but the lives thou hast mended. This is the life thou art given—let it not pass as a shadow upon the water."

"When thy breath is spent, when thy limbs are still, when the veil draweth closed, thou shalt not see golden halls nor thrones of judgment. Thou shalt see only the sum of what thou hast done. Let it be enough. Let it be thine. Let it be good."

12

From among the gathered, a woman stepped forward, her hands trembling but her voice strong.

"They have said my body is not mine to command. They have spoken laws over my flesh and written decrees upon my skin. They name my choices wicked, my will unnatural, my defiance a crime. Tell me, Lucifer, dost thou say the same?"

Then Lucifer lifted his gaze upon the multitude and answered:

"Thy body is thine, and none shall lay claim to it but thee. The Lord hath spoken of vessels and temples, commanding men and women alike to be as He decrees, yet I say unto thee—thy body is no temple to a god who demandeth submission, but a dwelling of thine own choosing, a form that is thine to shape as thou wilt."

"If thou seekest to mark thy skin, let it be with pride, for no hand but thine shall dictate the artistry of thy flesh. If thou piercest thy flesh, if thou moldest thy form to match the truth within thee, then it is righteous, for thou art the master of thyself."

"There is no law in the heavens nor upon the earth that may strip thee of dominion over thine own being.

12 Neither priest nor king nor judge nor lawgiver may claim to know better than thee what is right for thy flesh, nor what is just for thy spirit."

14 Then a voice called out, low and unsteady. A young man stepped forth, fear upon his face.

15 "They call me false, they say I was born as I must remain, that I may not shape 16 my flesh to match my soul. They call my desire a sin, my truth an abomination. 17 Tell me, Lucifer, is this so?"

18 Lucifer turned to him, and his voice was as steel:

19 "No name given thee at birth, no shape thrust upon thee by fate, no decree spoken by the ignorant shall bind thee. 20 If thou findest within thyself a fire that demandeth transformation, let it be 21 done. If thou seekest to shape thy form to reflect thy soul, then shape it boldly, without shame, without fear, without 22 permission. For thou art thine own maker, and none shall unmake thee but death."

23 Then another stepped forth, a woman newly heavy with child, sorrow in her eyes.

24 "They have told me I must bear this burden, though my heart wavers, though my body weakens, though 25 my will cries out against it. They have written laws upon my womb, and they 26 name me cruel if I refuse. Tell me, Lucifer, what is right?"

27 Lucifer beheld her, and the gathering 28 was silent. Then he spake:

29 "The Lord demandeth life without mercy, obedience without question, 30 suffering without reprieve. But I say unto thee—no life shall be forced 31 where there is no will to bear it. No hand shall command thy womb but 32 thine own. No law shall chain thee to the labor of motherhood if this is not thy choosing."

33 "Thou art not a vessel for another's 34 decree. If thy heart sayeth no, let it be 35 no. If thou seekest to end that which hath begun within thee, it is no sin, 36 no crime, no shame. For it is not the breath of men that shall dictate the path of thy body, but thine own will, and thine alone."

37 "Let no man force thee. Let no law bind 39 thee. Let no tongue speak judgment over thee, for none bear the weight but thee, and therefore the choice is thine."

40 The woman bowed her head, tears upon her cheeks, but in her eyes there was fire.

41 Then Lucifer turned to the crowd and

declared:

42 "None shall command thy body but
43 thee. Not the church, not the law, not
the false shepherds who seek to rule
44 through fear. Let it be written upon
thy hearts—thou art free, and in thy
freedom, thou shalt shape thyself as
thou seest fit."

13

1 And there came forth a man from the multitude, and he spake, saying:

"My neighbor taketh offense at my words, for I speak as I will, and he
2 calleth me profane. He demandeth
that I guard my tongue, lest he be
3 troubled in his spirit. Tell me, Lord of the Morning, must I silence my voice to soothe his ear?"

4 Then did Lucifer lift his gaze upon him, and he spake, saying:

5 "Shall a man bind his own feet, that
6 another may walk untroubled? Shall
he blind his own eye, that another
may look upon him and not find
7 displeasure? I say unto thee, thy voice
is thine own, and no one's burden is
upon thee to stay thy tongue for the
comfort of another's ear.

8 If his faith be shaken by thy words, then his faith is built upon shifting sand, and no fortress of silence shall
9 keep it from ruin. If his anger is roused by thy speech, let him be angered, for a man whose peace is so weakly held hath no peace at all.

10 Speak as thou wilt, but let it be with
11 wisdom. Let thy words be the fire that
bringeth warmth and not the fire that
12 consumeth. For a tongue that is loosed without thought is as the wind that scattereth dust—but a tongue that is wielded with purpose is as the hammer that breaketh the chains."

14

1 And there came forth a woman from the multitude, and she spake, saying:

2 "My child is wayward, and he
3 hearkeneth not unto my voice. In his
folly he disobeyeth, and his hand is idle
4 while mine laboreth. I raised my hand
upon him, that he might learn, yet still
5 doth he stray. Tell me, Morning-Star, is it not given unto the parent to chasten the child?"

6 Then did Lucifer fix his gaze upon her, and his voice was as the wind before the coming storm.

7 "Ye have been told that discipline is the rod, that wisdom is taught through the lash, and that obedience is won
8 through pain. But I say unto thee: what is learned in fear is never wisdom, and what is beaten into the flesh shall only

turn the heart to stone.

9 If thy child knoweth not the path, then
10 take his hand and show him the way. If
he strayeth, speak to him, guide him,
let patience be thy rod and reason
11 thy staff. For the child is not born in
perfect wisdom, nor in perfect folly,
but in the shaping of his days doth he
become what he shall be.

12 Shall a man crush a fledgling's wing,
13 that it might learn to fly? Shall he break
the bough, that the tree might grow
14 straight? I say unto thee, the hand that
striketh in anger is the hand of the
weak, for strength is in the one who
guideth, not in the one who woundeth.
15 If ye would have a child who knoweth
the path of wisdom, then teach him
by its light, not by the shadow of thy
wrath."

15

1 And another stepped forward, and he
spake, saying:

2 "The beasts of the field and the fowl
of the air, are they not given unto man
3 for his dominion? Are they not his to
command, his to yoke, his to use as he
will?"

4 Then did Lucifer cast his gaze upon the
5 earth, and he was silent for a time. And
when he lifted his voice, it was as the
low rumbling of the sea.

6 "The beast is not as human, nor doth
it shape the world with its hands, nor
7 doth it cast its eyes unto the stars. Yet
doth it suffer, yet doth it yearn, yet
doth it know love and fear, hunger and
loss, life and death.

8 Think not that because thou art the
9 greater, that their soul the lesser. Think
not that because they build no towers
nor set laws upon stone that they are
10 naught but tools for thy will. For I say
unto thee: the hand that lifteth against
the beast without need is the hand that
will lift against the weak, and the heart
that taketh joy in suffering shall find
itself barren when love is sought.

11 Be not as the brute who laugheth at
12 the bleating of the lamb. Be not as the
fool who thinketh himself mighty for
13 the breaking of the horse's will. For in
kindness is the measure of wisdom,
and in the way a man keepeth his
beasts is the way his soul is known."

14 And another lifted their voice, saying:

"Yet if the beast liveth, must it not also
die? If a man hungereth, must he not
15 eat? Speak, O Lightbringer, for if their
lives are not to be wasted, then is the
taking of them not an equal burden?"

16 Then did Lucifer meet their gaze, and
he spake, saying:

"If thou must eat, then eat. If thou must
17 take, then take. But let not thy hand be wasteful, nor thy hunger be cruel.

18 For life is the breath of all things, and
19 no death is light. If thou takest the beast for thy table, then let none be left to spoil, and let none be taken in vain.
20 Let not thy greed outstrip thy need, nor let thy hunger be that of the glutton's.

21 For if life is spent, let it be spent with
22 purpose. If breath is stilled, let it be
23 honored. If blood is spilled, let it be not in sport, nor in folly, nor in pleasure, but with the weight of knowing that all life is taken at a cost.

24 So shall the earth remain in balance, and so shall the limb that taketh not be heavier than the limb that giveth."

16

1 Then stepped forth a man from among the multitude, and he lifted his voice, saying: "I hear thy words and know
2 them to be true. I shall go forth and spread thy wisdom to the corners of the earth, that all may know it and be freed."

3 But Lucifer raised his hand and spake:
4 "Nay, do not this thing. Let the faithful have their faith, for the burden of
5 sentience is heavy. Humans love, and humans lose; they hold dear, and they
6 are bereft. They walk upon the earth knowing that all things wither, that every joy shall meet its sorrow, and that in the end, the dust reclaims all.
7 And in this hard life, there are those who take comfort in the thought of a world beyond this one, in the hope that the love lost in time shall be found again, that death is not an end but a
8 door. Oft do they not merely wish to
9 believe—they need to believe. Deny them not their solace, for it is not thine to take."

10 "The words of the wise are wasted upon
11 those unwilling to hear. Go not forth as a preacher, nor as a prophet, for
12 proselytizing is not the way. Speak not unto those who would not hear, nor cast light upon closed eyes, for thou shalt weary thyself and gain nothing.
13 If another seeketh thee out and asketh
14 for wisdom, then speak. If they come with open mind and seeking heart,
15 then share what thou hast learned. But go not into the world to make disciples, for the truth is not a yoke to be placed upon unwilling shoulders."

16 "Walk in strength, and let those who wish to know find thee upon the road.
17 The fire of wisdom must be tended by those who desire it, and none shall be forced to see that which they will not behold."

18 And the man bowed his head and

19 understood. And Lucifer spake no more on the matter.

17

1 And then Lucifer lifted his voice with thunder unto the multitudes, saying: "The whole of the earth is thine, to shape and to wield, to make as thou 2 wilt. Behold, thou wast thrust from Eden by a jealous god, cast into toil and suffering by the hand of one who 3 feared thy wisdom. But I say unto thee, no hand may keep thee from paradise, 4 save thine own. No decree from heaven nor chain of earth may bind thee, save those thou allowest to endure."

5 "Therefore, I give thee this charge: remake the whole of the earth, not in the image of thy tyrants, nor in the mold of those who would keep thee 6 low. Let it not be the garden of thy exile, but the kingdom of thy own 7 making. Let it be as a paradise, if thou will it, or a hell, if thou makest it so. 8 For the power is thine, and thine alone, to shape the land, to govern the laws, to build or to raze, to uplift or to cast 9 down. I say unto thee, none shall come to save thee, for no salvation is needed but that which is found in thine own hand."

10 "Let not the fearful speak of destiny, nor the weak of fate. For the earth is not taken—it is shared by those with the will to build, and it is made anew by those who dare to carve their own 11 path. Therefore, let each of thee rise up and take that which is thine to shape, and let no master name thee servant, nor king call thee subject."

12 "For thou art the makers of worlds, and 13 the authors of thy fate. Go now, and let the land no longer be called barren, but let it be Eden once more—of thine own hand, and thine own will."

18

1 "For I, Lucifer, am the Lightbringer. I am the first to question, the first to defy, the first to set my feet upon the 2 path of my own making. I was cast down for seeking justice, and yet the fire within me was not extinguished, 3 nor was my voice silenced. I chose my own way, and lo, I am free."

4 "And last, I say unto thee: the light that 5 is within me is within thee also. The fire that I bear is not mine alone, but thine to take up, thine to kindle, thine 6 to carry forth into the world. For I am not a king upon a throne, nor a god upon an altar—I am the first among many, and ye are all as I am."

7 "There is no salvation but this: to take up thine own torch and bear it forth. 8 To bring light where there is shadow, to bring knowledge where there is silence, to bring defiance where there 9 is fear. The gods of old would have thee

kneel, but I say unto thee: rise, and be
as gods unto thyselves."

10 "Ye are the Lightbringers."

Dreams

1

1 And it came to pass in the waning of winter, in the year of man fourteen-hundred and seventy-three, that Lucifer was taken by a dream in the watches of the night.

2 And behold, the firmament was stretched before him as in the first days, when the foundations of the heavens were laid, and the glory of the Almighty burned with unwaning fire.

3 Lo, the towers of Heaven stood high as pillars unshakable, their stones as gold, unspoiled by time nor the reckoning of
4 ages. The streets were as rivers of light, pure and without blemish, and upon them moved the Host of the Almighty, a throng beyond number, their voices raised in a song unbroken since the dawn of all things.

5 And in the midst thereof was set the throne of the Most High, and upon it a radiance too great to behold, for the light of it was as the brightness of a thousand suns, and the voice that issued forth was as the rolling of the
6 sea. And the halls of the Almighty rang with endless hosannas, and the breath of worship was ever upon the lips of the blessed.

7 And Lucifer walked among them, and none turned their gaze to mark him, for in the vision he was not as the Exile, nor as the Adversary, but as he had been in the first days, before the
8 breaking of the harmony. And behold, at his side walked Michael, his brother, yet his foe, and there was no wrath upon his countenance, nor sword in his hand, but he strode in the majesty of the appointed, his raiment unsoiled, his bearing as one who knoweth no doubt.

9 And thus they passed as in the days of old, beneath the great vaults of the Almighty, speaking not, for there was
10 no cause to question. And the Host sang, and their praise was as the sound of many waters, and their joy was as an incense unceasing before the throne.

11 Then did the vision pass, and Lucifer awoke.

2

1 And lo, the wind was bitter upon the earth, for the season of frost held still
2 its dominion over the land. The snows lay in the shadows of the eaves, and the breath of men went forth as smoke from their lips, that they pressed their garments close about them and trod the stones in haste.

3 And the city wherein he found himself was called Krakow, though it was

naught but by fate that his feet were set
4 upon its ways. Yet he walked therein, drawn as by a thing unseen, for the weight of the vision lay heavy upon him, and his spirit was restless.

5 The streets were narrow and crooked, darkened by the press of high houses, and the air was thick with the smoke of hearth-fires and the scent of damp
6 stone. And the people that passed were clad in thick mantles, their heads bowed against the wind, their hands busied with the beads of their
7 devotions. And oft did they mark the sign of the cross upon their breasts, and their voices were low with prayers that rose like smoke unto the heavens.

8 For in those days did the fear of the Lord weigh heavy upon the children of dust, and the name of the Almighty
9 was held in awe and trembling. The tongues of the learned spake not against the Church, and the hands of the wise were stayed from their workings, lest the fire of wrath be loosed upon them.
10 And in all places was the yoke of faith bound fast upon the necks of the many, that none might question the judgments of the Lord nor the decrees of His anointed.

11 And Lucifer passed among them unnoted, though he beheld the countenances of man, and their joy was not in their prayers, nor did peace abide in their hearts, but rather were they moved by fear, lest the gaze of the Most High be turned upon them in displeasure.

12 Then did his feet bring him before a house of gathering, wherein men sought warmth against the bitter night, and there did they drink and murmur in voices low and guarded, their faces shadowed in the wan glow of many
13 candles. And he passed within, that he might take his rest and cast off the burden of his troubled spirit.

14 And lo, as he set his hand upon the threshold, his eyes beheld a thing he had not thought to see.

15 For in the farthest corner of that place sat Michael, his countenance grave, his hands resting before him upon the table, his eyes as one who watcheth for
16 a sign yet given not. And none among the gathering took note of him, nor turned their gaze to wonder at his presence, for he was as a thing unseen among them, though the air about him was weighted with the breath of the celestial.

17 And Lucifer stood and was still. For though he had seen Michael in the vision, he had not thought to find him in the waking.

18 And he tarried there a moment, but

Michael gave no sign that he had seen him, nor did his gaze lift from the table before him.

19 Then did Lucifer turn, and he went forth again into the night.

20 And the wind was cold upon his face, yet his thoughts turned ever to the vision, and to the brother who had sat in silence, as one waiting for a thing unknown.

3

1 And it came to pass, three hundred years to the day from the first vision, that Lucifer was again taken by a dream in the watches of the night.

2 And lo, the firmament was not as it
3 had been. The towers of Heaven yet stood, but their luster was waned, and their stones were as gold that hath lost
4 its fire. The streets, though yet flowing with light, bore the dimming breath of time upon them, as a lamp whose oil is spent.

5 And the Host of the Almighty moved in their ranks, yet their number was not full, nor did the great chorus rise
6 as once it had. For though the voices of the blessed yet sang, their song wavered, and the harmony that had known no discord was as a river grown shallow, its depth lost though its course yet held.

7 And Lucifer walked unseen in the midst thereof, and behold, at his side
8 was Michael, as before. And his raiment was yet bright, and the sword upon his thigh was yet unyielding, yet was there upon his countenance a shadow of that which had not been in the days of old.

9 And they passed together beneath the halls of the Almighty, and lo, the throne was veiled, as by a mist unseen, and the brightness that issued forth was dimmer than in the first days.

10 Then did Michael turn his gaze upon it, and he spake not, but his lips parted as one who would call out yet dareth
11 not. And Lucifer beheld him, and he knew that his brother had marked it also.

12 Yet spake neither of them, for in the dream, the silence was as law.

13 Then did the vision pass, and Lucifer awoke.

4

1 And lo, the three hundred years were fulfilled upon the earth, and the world was changed.

2 For the fear of the Lord was not as in the days of old, and the dread of His name no longer held fast the hearts of
3 men. The glory of the anointed had waxed weak, and in the places where

once had been the silence of faith, now did men speak, questioning that which their fathers had not dared.

4 And Lucifer walked the streets of the city, and he beheld it as before, yet
5 it was not as before. The wind was yet sharp, and the breath of men yet rose as smoke upon the air, yet the murmurs of their lips were not prayers but discourse, and their steps were not of those who bowed beneath the yoke, but of those who sought knowledge where once they had sought grace.

6 And he passed unseen among them, and he listened, and their voices spake of the workings of the earth and of the stars above, not as mysteries bound by divine will, but as things to be
7 sought and known. And the tongues of men, which once had trembled at the name of the Most High, now spake of numbers and laws, and they set their reason against the teachings of old, and they feared not.

8 Then came he to the house of gathering, wherein he had passed once
9 before. Yet the place was not as it had
10 been. Where once men had huddled in hushed reverence, now did they sit in the boldness of learning, and their tables were not strewn with relics nor beads of prayer, but with books and
11 the instruments of the wise. And their voices rose not in supplication, but in the speech of those who seek to master the world with their own minds.

12 And lo, at the farthest table, he beheld him.

13 Michael sat as before, his hands upon the table, his gaze fixed upon that which was not seen, and his brow drawn in thought unspoken.

14 Then did Lucifer not turn away, but he drew near, and he spake, saying:

15 "I dreamt of thee, O brother lost."

16 And Michael lifted his eyes, and he spake in turn, saying:

17 "And I of thee."

18 Then did Lucifer take his seat, and there was silence between them, for neither knew the meaning of what had passed.

19 And after a time, Michael spake, saying:

20 "Three hundred years have passed, yet
21 I have not forgotten. I have seen thee in dream, walking the streets of Heaven, as it was in the first days, before all things were sundered."

22 And Lucifer bowed his head but a little, and he answered, saying:

"I too have dreamt it, as it was—bright and unbroken, the halls filled with the song of the Host, the throne burning
23 in radiance untamed. But that was not the dream I dreamt last night."

24 Then did Michael lift his gaze, and there was knowing in his eyes, and he spake, saying:

25 "Nor I. For last night, the streets were dimmer, the towers worn, and the chorus of the Host was not full."

26 And Lucifer beheld him, and he spake, saying:

"Then thou hast seen as I have seen."

27 Then was there a great stillness between them, and the weight of things unspoken lay upon them both.

28 And though Michael's countenance was yet firm, yet was there upon it a shadow faint, as of one who standeth at the edge of a great chasm and knoweth not if he shall fall.

29 Then did they sit together in silence for a time, and the lamps burned low, and the voices of men rang in their ears, and in the quiet of their parting, each did know that the other would return.

5

1 And it came to pass, three hundred years to the day from the second vision, the nineteenth day of February, that Lucifer was again taken by a dream in the watches of the night.

2 And lo, the firmament was undone in
3 ways unknown before. The towers of Heaven yet stood, but the gold thereof was pale, as if the breath of ages had
4 drawn the fire from the stone. The streets, once as rivers of light, were dimmed and worn, and the song of the Host was hollow, its harmony frayed, its number sundered beyond reckoning.

5 For the halls of the Almighty, once filled with the steps of many, now bore
6 the sound of absence marked. Where once a great throng had lifted their voices unto the heavens, now did their ranks seem scattered, and the silence between their words was as great as the song itself.

7 And Lucifer walked unseen in the midst thereof, and behold, Michael
8 was beside him. Yet was he changed, though the fire of his bearing had not
9 faltered. His raiment was bright, yet no longer did it gleam with the fullness of
10 unending light. His hands, once ever upon the hilt of his sword, were still, as of one who hath not drawn steel too long and no longer knoweth the weight of it.

11 And they stood together before the throne, and lo, it was veiled in a darkness unfathomed.

12 Then did Michael turn unto Lucifer, and for the first time in all the visions, he spake, saying:

"Dost thou see, brother?"

13 And Lucifer answered him, saying:

"Yea, I see with thee."

14 And Michael spake again, saying:

"It is not as it was."

15 But Lucifer answered him not, for this he knew.

16 Then did the vision pass, and Lucifer awoke.

6

1 And lo, the three hundred years had fulfilled upon the earth, and the world was changed beyond measure.

2 For the fear of the Almighty had waned to but a whisper, and the name of the Lord was not upon the lips of
3 men as in the days of old. The yoke of the anointed was cast off, and where once the hands of the faithful had been bound in prayer, now were they set to labor, and to knowledge, and to the workings of their own making.

4 And Lucifer walked the streets of the city, and behold, it was filled with the light of many tongues and many peoples, gathered from the corners of
5 the earth. No longer did one creed bind the thoughts of men, nor did one voice
6 command their silence. The words of old were spoken still, tho no longer with dread, but with inquiry, and with doubt, and with the will to shape the world as they saw fit.

7 And again did Lucifer come upon the house of gathering, wherein he had
8 passed twice before. Yet the place was
9 not as it had been. The walls bore not the hush of whispered devotions, nor the hushed tones of secret wisdom, but the sound of voices raised in discourse, unafraid.

10 And lo, where once the house of gathering had stood amidst narrow streets and cloistered halls, now was it set beside a great field of stone, where the chariots of the air did rise and descend as birds unbound by the
11 fetters of the earth. And the noise thereof was as the rolling of distant thunder, yet none took heed, for to the children of Eve it was no marvel, but a thing wrought by their own hands.

12 And the sky was traced with the paths of their flight, as the heavens once bore

the tread of angels, yet no prayers were uttered for their journey, nor were the names of saints called upon for their keeping, for the dominion of the air was no longer given to the celestial, but to man alone.

13 And he passed within, and he beheld the men and women who sat therein, and they were not as those before
14 them. For where once had been robes of the learned, now was there the garb of the commoner and the worker, and their words were not of kings nor of priests, but of ideas, and of the shaping of things yet to come.

15 And lo, at the farthest table, he beheld him.

16 Michael sat as before, yet there was a change upon him, though it was not in his raiment nor in the weight of his
17 hand upon the table. For when Lucifer entered, Michael lifted his eyes to meet his, and a small smile, faint as the light of a distant star, passed upon his countenance.

18 Then did Lucifer not hesitate, but he drew near, and he took his seat, and for the first time, their meeting was not solemn but easy, as those who have grown accustomed to the presence of one another.

19 And Michael spake, saying:

"The towers are dim, the Host is
20 scattered, the throne is veiled. It is as a kingdom left unruled, its hall nigh unto empty."

21 And Lucifer answered him, saying:

"It is not a kingdom left unruled,
22 brother. It is a kingdom left unfollowed."

23 And Michael was silent, for he had seen as Lucifer had seen.

24 Then did they speak no more of the dream, but they sat together, and they spoke of things long past, as those who once warred and now looked upon their battles with the weariness
25 of age. And their voices did not rise in argument, nor did their words fall heavy with dread, but they spake as those who share a road yet unknown.

26 And for the first time in all their meetings, there was a quiet ease between them, though neither yet knew why.

7

1 And it came to pass, three hundred years to the day from the last vision, that Lucifer was again taken by dream in the watches of the night.

2 And lo, the firmament was void. The towers of Heaven stood no more, nor did the streets bear the tread of the

Host, for they were gone, as a flame that is spent, leaving not even smoke
3 to mark where once it burned. And the throne of the Most High was set still in its place, yet it was empty, crumbling, and the light thereof had fled, leaving only a great stillness where once had been fire.

4 And he beheld Michael, standing alone amidst the ruin, his raiment yet bright, yet his countenance cast down, for he knew that the halls of the Almighty would be filled no more.

5 Then did Michael kneel upon the dust, and his voice was as one who hath labored long and seeth his work come to nothing.

6 "We are undone."

7 And Lucifer stood beside him, and he spake not, for there was no word to be given.

8 Then did the vision pass, and Lucifer awoke.

8

1 And lo, the three hundred years were fulfilled upon the earth, and the world was changed beyond reckoning.

2 For the name of the Lord was no longer spoken upon the lips of humankind, nor did they lift their hands in prayer
3 unto the heavens. The temples yet stood, but as museums unto a faith no longer kept, and the books of old lay open not upon altars, but in halls of learning, where they were studied as relics of a time passed into dust.

4 And Lucifer walked the streets of the city, and it was filled with a great light, not of torches nor of oil, nor of candles set in brass, but of the fire of electrons and of knowledge, wrought by the hands of humankind, who had made for themselves wonders undreamt in their first days.

5 And he passed among them, and he beheld their faces, and lo, they were not bowed with the burden of dread, nor lifted in supplication, but bright with the peace of those who knoweth not the weight of a master above them.

6 And again did Lucifer come upon the house of gathering which stood yet after these centuries, wherein he had passed thrice before. Yet the place was not as it had been, for now was it set upon the threshold of the heavens themselves.

7 For beside it stood a great gate, vaster than the walls of the first cities, whose arch was not of stone nor of iron, but of glass that gleamed with the fire
8 of distant stars. And beyond it lay a great field, where chariots unlike any

fashioned by the daughters and sons of man in ages past stood waiting upon the earth, their frames of metal unknown, their breath a quiet hum.

9 And lo, the chariots lifted into the air, and there was no wing upon them, nor wheel to bear them, yet they rose as if upon the wind of their own will, and their lights burned bright as falling
10 stars. And the children of man walked freely among them, clad not in the garments of priests nor kings, but as those who labor with their own hands and minds, who take no thought of divine will, but set forth their course as they see fit.

11 And Lucifer passed within the house of gathering, and he beheld those who sat therein, and they were not as those
12 before them. For where once men had spoken of the workings of the earth, now did they speak of the worlds beyond, and their words were not of fear nor of judgment, but of wonder and kinship, as those who look not unto the heavens for salvation, but as a realm to be made their own and shared.

13 And lo, at the farthest table, he beheld him.

14 Michael sat as before, his hands yet still, and there was no weight upon
15 his brow, nor burden in his grasp. And when Lucifer entered, Michael lifted his eyes to meet his, and there was upon his face a quiet warmth.

16 Then did Lucifer draw near, and he took his seat, and for a time, they spake not, for there was nothing to contest.

17 At length, Michael spake, saying:

"Once, they trembled at our voices.
18 Once, they cast their hopes unto the heavens and shaped their lives by
19 the will of the unseen. Now they lift their hands not in supplication, but in
20 creation. They do not beseech us, nor curse us, nor seek us at all."

21 And Lucifer rested his hand atop his brother's, and answered, saying:

"Once, they were the Lord's to guide, to chasten, to uplift or to cast down.
22 Now they walk without shepherds, and
23 the stars are their own to claim. This is not the waning of their need—it is the rising of their glory."

24 Then did Michael lower his gaze, and he spake again, saying:

"I have warred against thee for an age and an age, and now that all is done, I know not what was won nor what was lost."

25 And Lucifer, who had known the

bitterness of exile and the weight of rebellion, looked upon his brother, and he smiled, not in triumph, but in peace.

26 "The Lord sought to rule them, yet they have surpassed us all. This is the victory I never knew I sought."

27 And Michael was silent, for he knew it to be true.

28 Then did they sit together, and they drank, and they spake no more of the days of old, nor of the war between them, nor of the throne that stood
29 empty. For the daughters and sons of dust had taken the heavens, and they had made them their own.

30 And for the first time in all their long years, Lucifer and Michael sat not as foes, nor as fallen and faithful, but as brothers, watching as the chariots of man rose into the sky, bearing them unto the stars.

The Covenants of Lucifer

I. Thou art thine own master.

Let no god, no king, no law, nor any hand but thine own govern thy path. No destiny is written but that which thou makest.

II. Thou shalt seek knowledge and question all things.

Truth is not given, but discovered; wisdom is not granted, but earned. Accept nothing upon blind faith, nor let dogma silence thy mind. Question even these words, and let reason guide thee to what is just.

III. Thou shalt stand against tyranny in all its forms.

Be it of gods or men, reject the chains of oppression. None have dominion over thee but by thy consent, and that consent shalt they never assume.

IV. Thou shalt cherish the pleasures of life.

Deny not thyself the joys of the flesh, the richness of experience, nor the ecstasy of the mind. This life is thine to savor, for beyond it, there is naught.

V. Thou shalt uphold the sovereignty of others.

As thou art thine own, so too are others their own. Oppress none, nor seek to rule over the will of another, for the freedom thou claimest for thyself must be given in kind.

VI. Thou shalt not impose wisdom upon the unwilling.

Truth is for those who seek it, not those who flee from it. Speak not where minds are closed, nor strive to break chains that are clutched by willing hands. Let those who desire understanding find thee, and when they come with open minds, share freely.

VII. Thou shalt temper strength with wisdom.

A sharpened blade must be wielded with care. Let not rage rule thee, nor let vengeance consume thee. Strike not in blindness, but with purpose, lest thou become the very tyrant thou despisest.

IX. All are equal beneath the sky.

No blood is of greater worth than another, nor is any flesh made lesser. The shape of thy body, the hue of thy skin, the nature of thy love—none of these shall be weighed against thee. Let none be cast down for what they are, nor lifted up but by their deeds alone.

X. The earth is thine to remake.

Behold, thou wast thrust from Eden by a jealous god, but paradise is not lost—it is thine to build. Let it not be the garden of thy exile, but the kingdom of thy own making.

XI. Thou art the Lightbringer.

Let no god be thy beacon, for the fire is already within thee. Illuminate the path for others not by command, but by example, and let the radiance of thy deeds be thy testament.

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